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C:\>Directory



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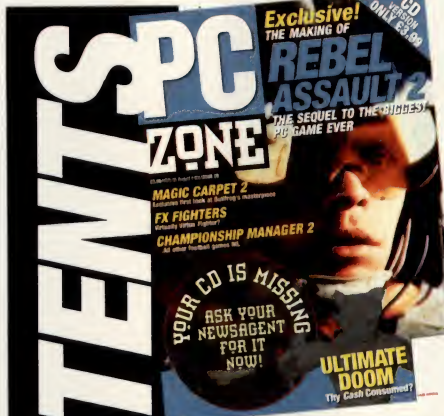
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The sequel to one of the biggest PC titles ever is set to be released before Christmas. We take an early look at one of the most eagerly awaited games of the year on page 53.



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THE CLOSEST THING TO VIRTUA FIGHTER on the PC and by far the best beat 'em up you can buy at the moment.

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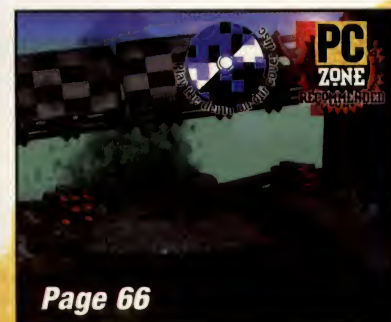
IT'S AN INTERACTIVE MOVIE. NO, IT'S A game. It's an interactive movie. No, it's a game. ARRRGHHH!!!

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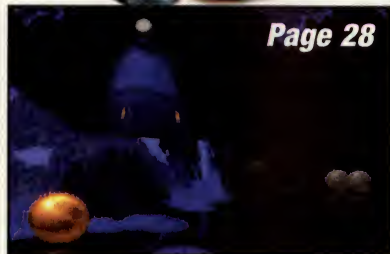
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WE TAKE A FIRST LOOK AT BULLFROG'S latest masterpiece. This is the first part of an ongoing report that will feature an exclusive demo on next month's CD.



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C:\>Cover Disk

HD DISK



Make the drive containing your floppy current by typing "A:" and then type "PCZONE" to install the contents onto your hard drive.

Panzer General (SSI)

A classic hex-game of the highest calibre, *Panzer General* is to wargamers what *Doom* is to normal people.

Don your spiky hat, twizzle your handlebar 'tache and embark on a military tour of the battlefields of Northern Europe (i.e. Poland) as you attempt to guide your force to victory in this superb WWII battle sim.

Controls: Mouse

Specifications: 486 SX, 4Mb RAM

The Complete Descent Level Editor

Now you can create your very own levels for some real head-to-head *Deathmatch* action. Access the README.TXT file for further information on how to build your very own levels.



(Above) Create your very own levels with our splendid Descent Level Editor.

(Left) I want your Hex. A fully playable demo of the rather wonderful *Panzer General* is yours for the taking this month.

No CD?

If you are unable to get your grubby paws on the CD issue, then fear not! Simply fill out this slip, enclose your HD from the cover plus a cheque for a whole £1 and send it to:

Miles Tudor, CD Exchange (29), PC Zone, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover St, London. W1P 7HJ

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CDs from previous issues are also available.

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CD-ROM DISC



From the DOS prompt, type "D:" (presuming your CD drive letter is D) and then "PCZONE". Use your mouse or the cursor keys to sweep the menu and hit [RETURN] to select.

PLAYABLE DEMOS

Hi-Octane (Bullfrog)

Magic Carpet meets *Need For Speed* in this electrifying new racing game from Bullfrog.

Select one of the two different hover ships and then get ready for the ride of your life as you hurl around an undulating fully texture-mapped track littered with power-ups, shortcuts and smash-hungry opponents.

Controls: Keyboard or joystick

Specifications: 486 DX, 4Mb RAM

Micro Machines 2 (Codemasters)

More manic street screecher fun, courtesy of Codemasters with the new and ever-so improved table-top chasers.

Controls: Keyboard, joystick or gamepad

Specifications: 486 DX, 4Mb RAM

Dr Drago's Madcap Chase (Blue Byte)

Travel the world in search of riches and unconsumed wealth in this wacky new game of life from Blue Byte.

Controls: Mouse

Specifications: 486 SX, 4Mb RAM

Darker (Psygnosis)

Fly your Caero fighter over the fully texture-mapped landscape and do battle with the Halon Gouraud shaded ships, keeping as close as possible to the energy-giving beacons to keep you airborne over the Delphi City. Only



(Right) WARNING! *Hi-Octane* is for speed freaks only. Refuel your craft by zipping through the appropriate tunnel. Collect power-ups to boost your weaponry and turbos.



three of the eight weapons are available in this demo, and just one type of interceptor, but that's more than enough to give you a taster of the forthcoming blaster from Psyggy.

To complete the demo mission, use the on-screen radar to locate the infiltrators and then blast them into tiny globules with the correct weapon.

Controls: Keyboard, mouse or joystick

Specifications: 486 SX, 4Mb RAM

Lemmings 3D (Psygnosis)

A new demo of the highly addictive "do or die" frustration-fest, now with an extra dimension - it's in 3D.

Controls: Mouse

Specifications: 486 DX, 4Mb RAM

Pinball Mania

(21st Century Entertainment)

You don't have to be a wizard to enjoy this flipper-tastic pinball game from 21st Century, but it will probably help.

Use the left and right [SHIFT] keys to operate the flippers, [CURSOR DOWN] to launch the ball and [SPACE] to tilt the table.

Controls: Keyboard

Specifications: 386 SX, 4Mb RAM

The Scroll (Psygnosis)

Point 'n' click action and adventure a-plenty with serious weirdy Ancient Egyptian undertones make this an altogether mysterious affair.

Controls: Mouse

Specifications: 486 SX, 4Mb RAM

Super Streetfighter II Turbo

(Gametek)

Furious fisticuff fun courtesy of Gametek, the first to bring "arcade perfect" console action to the PC. Choose your combatant, master the moves and indulge in some serious slapping in this, the best of the *Streetfighter* beat 'em ups released on the PC to date.

Controls: Keyboard, gamepad

Specifications: 486 DX, 4Mb RAM

Space Quest VI (Sierra)

Roger Wilco's gone all hi-res and talkie in the latest instalment of the smash hit space adventurin' series from Sierra.

Point and click your way around this massive playable demo as you battle to save your crew members from living the rest of their lives as dessert.

Controls: Mouse

Specifications: 386 DX (486 rec.), 4Mb RAM

PREVIEWS

Coming soon to a screen near you...

PC Zone presents some running demos of games currently in development and due for release over the coming months.

Rebel Assault 2 (LucasArts)

A sneak peak at the forthcoming blockbuster from LucasArts due for release later this year. Check out our exclusive preview feature on page 53.

Primal Rage

(Time Warner Interactive)

You've read the preview on page 36 and marvelled at the screen shots, now load



Help!

The CD not working? HD playing up? The PCs just being a total bast? Then just relax, chill out, have a cold shower and then phone the relevant help line:

HD DISK HELP

Phone Matthew on 01274 738890

Any week day between 9am and 4pm.

CD-ROM HELP

Phone Miles Tudor on 0171 917 7683

Any week day between 11am and 6pm.

(DO NOT phone earlier as your calls will NOT be answered.)

If you are calling either help line, then please take note of the following points:

- If possible have your PC operating and near to the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down as much relevant information as possible i.e. System type, sound card, RAM etc., plus the nature of the fault.
- Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call to jot down the relevant info.



(Left) Pink Floyd have not decided to go interactive, but Psygnosis has with *Darker* - a thinking man's shoot 'em up.

(Far left) The shape of things to come. Check out our exclusive teaser of *Rebel Assault 2*.

up this demo, watch it move and see why they're calling it "arcade perfect".

Culky Goes To EA

The mischievous Culky pays a visit to Electronic Arts and causes a rumpus with a security guard, a receptionist, Mrs Middleton at number 26 and just about everyone else for that matter.

Windows '95 (Microsoft)

Microsoft's latest graphical user interface and Operating System finally makes its way out of development.

Gasp at how easy it makes living with your PC thanks to new 32-bit Plug & Play technology. Coo at all that multi-tasking. Gush enthusiastically at the speed with which it accomplishes the most difficult tasks. Chuckle knowingly at how simple it is to get on-line and at all the e-mail you'll receive thanks to the new and improved Windows '95. Laugh out loud. *(I think that's enough. Ed.)* dos is dead. Long live Windows '95.

FEATURES

Star Wars Special

Just to get you in the mood we've rounded up some of the best *Star Wars* demos and whacked them onto the CD for some serious Force-tastic enjoyment.

Dark Forces (LucasArts)

Arguably the best *Doom*-clone to surface since *Doom*, LucasArts blended all the action and atmosphere of the world's greatest 3D blaster with the finest of gaming scenarios and came up trumps.

Controls: Mouse or keyboard

Specifications: 486 DX 4Mb RAM

X-Wing (LucasArts)

Every *Star Wars* fan's dream became a reality when *X-Wing* flew onto the PC

(Below) Ol' Culkus here, doing a bit of rocket launching and that, at some software house.





in a blaze of glory back in May 1993.

Controls: Keyboard or joystick

Specifications: 386 DX (486 rec.), 4Mb RAM

TIE Fighter (LucasArts)

Swap sides (never!) and quash the Rebel Alliance with uncle Darth at the helm of an infinitely more butch TIE Fighter.

Controls: Keyboard, joystick

Specifications: 486 SX, 4Mb RAM

COMPETITIONS

Keep On Drummin'

What's pink, ten inches long, battery powered and very exciting? Errm...

The Drummer Bunny in the Duracell ads? Exactly! And now you can WIN!, WIN! WIN! loads of super prizes simply

by copying the Duracell Prize Challenge onto a floppy, installing it onto your hard drive and playing away. Every prize that you "win" in the game automatically gives you the chance to win it for real. All instructions on how to play are included in the game. Just click on the in-game "PRIZES" option to find out more.

Specifications: 386 SX, 4Mb RAM



MISCELLANEOUS

Level Editors & Trainers

A mixed bag of level editors, cheats and trainers for some of the hottest games around this month (including *UFO*, *Dark Forces*, *Descent*, *Doom* and *Heretic* to name just a few). Access the individual README.TXT files for further information and instructions on how to use the editors and trainers.

SirDoom

To tie in with the announcement of the PC Zone Doom Championship (see page 116), we give you SIRDOOM, a neat little comms package which will allow you to phone up the Gamesnet games BBS (0171-460-0515) and play four-player modem *Doom*. So get dialling and get practising. **Z**



Help Me! I'm Frowning...

Stuck? PC acting like the proverbial pain in the posterior? Well before you go and ring our tech support line, just take a quick butchers at this handy Trouble-shooting guide.

If you experience a problem, the first thing to do is check out the README.TXT files. This will give you in-depth information on the demo. To do this, type:

Edit readme.txt

If you still have difficulties the following troubleshooting tips may help.

Amnesia?

The most common problem that you'll hit while running any of the demos is a memory problem. Some programs require EMS others XMS, and your PC's configuration needs to be altered accordingly. To change the system you will need to edit your CONFIG.SYS in DOS. To do this, go to the C drive by typing:

```
C:
CD\
Edit Config.sys
```

You should then look for a line that reads Device=C:\DOS\EMM386.exe (if it's not there, then type this in under the first line). You should then add an extra bit that will depend on which set up you require:

For EMS

The line should read:
Device=C:\DOS\EMM386.exe RAM

For XMS

The line should read:
Device=C:\DOS\EMM386.exe NOEMS
You are advised to keep the EMS setting as a default. If you have DOS 6.0 or higher you can type Memmaker at the DOS prompt and say "yes" to EMS if required, or "no" if XMS is needed. Remember that some games can require up to 590K free base memory.

Boot Disk

If you are still having problems, then the next step is to make a boot

disk. If you are using DOS 6.0 or lower then just stick to the following steps:

Put a floppy in your A: drive and type: Format A:/S

This will erase all data on the diskette so use one that is no longer needed. When the disk has finished formatting, change to your A: drive. Type the following lines at the A prompt:

```
Copy con config.sys <Enter>
Dos=High <Enter>
Device=C:\DOS\Himem.sys <Enter>
Device=C:\DOS\EMM386.exe RAM <Enter>
```

(Or Device=C:\DOS\EMM386.exe NOEMS if XMS is required.)

Then add the lines for the sound card and CD-ROM drive in the same manner. (You can get these lines by looking at the original CONFIG.SYS on the C drive). Once finished press: F6 <Enter>

You should see the message "1 file(s) copied." If the message does not appear, please follow the instructions again.

IMPORTANT! ONLY USE THESE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE A DRIVE

Next, type the following lines at the A: prompt:

```
Copy Con Autoexec.bat <Enter>
Prompt $p$g <Enter>
```

All sound card and CD-ROM drive lines

You can find these command lines in the AUTOEXEC.BAT on the C drive. They may look similar to this:

```
Set Blaster=A220 I5 D1 H5 P330 T6
Set Sound=C:\SB16
```

Please note that these lines may look like this. Check your own AUTOEXEC.BAT beforehand. Once you have completed this, press f6, and again you should see message "1 file(s) copied." If the message does not appear please follow the instructions again.

IMPORTANT! ONLY USE THESE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE A DRIVE

Once you have done this, with the disk in drive A, press <Ctrl> <Alt> <Delete> keys together to reboot.

Clean Boot

If you have DOS 6.2 or higher you should reboot your computer. When you get the message "Starting MS-DOS", hit the f8 key at the top of

the keyboard. You will see the message "DOS will prompt you to confirm each CONFIG.SYS command". Say yes to the following lines:

```
DOS=High
Device=C:\DOS\Himem.sys
Device=C:\DOS\EMM386.exe RAM (Or NOEMS)
```

The relevant sound and CD drivers. Say no to the rest of your lines until you are asked to process your AUTOEXEC.BAT. Say yes to this line and the following:

```
Prompt $p$g
Path C:\Windows; C:\DOS
```

Also say yes to all sound card and CD-ROM drivers. Say no to everything else. This should sort things out.

Still Stuck?

No joy with your HD or CD? Then reach for the phone and dial up some help.

HD Disk Help

Phone Matthew on 01274 736990
(Weekdays between 9am and 4pm)

CD-ROM Help

Phone Miles on 0171 917 7693
(Weekdays between 11am and 6pm)

Before you call: Have your PC operating (preferably near the phone) and make sure you have a pen and paper handy to note down any info. Please have details of your machine spec and configuration ready before you call.

Important

Some of the programs on the CD are shareware, and as such, are supplied as an evaluation service to our readers. If you like the programs and intend to continue using them, you should register them with the publishers concerned. In return you will receive updated versions, extra levels, junk mail and loads of other stuff (probably).

All these CDs and HDs have been virus checked. HOWEVER, neither PC Zone, Dennis Publishing nor any associated companies can be deemed liable for any problems that may arise from using this disk.

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!

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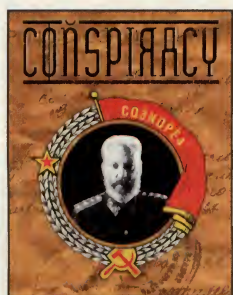
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S I E R R A[®]

BULLETIN

TFX: EF2000

ARGUABLY ONE OF THE BEST GAMES ON display at the recent E3 show in Las Vegas was *TFX: EF2000*, the aptly named sequel to the classic air combat sim *TFX* from Digital Image Design.

Although still far from completion, initial reports indicate that the game sports graphics to die for, thanks to new generation 3D graphics and state-of-the-art polygon mapping techniques which give an enhanced sense of realism. In addition to that, a newly developed eight-way network facility will turn the whole high-speed experience into the ultimate airborne multi-player challenge.

TFX: EF2000 was designed with the co-operation of British Aerospace, which supplied detailed (de-classified) information. An ex-RAF defence pilot helped recreate the interactive cockpit to make sure it

was truly representative of the real thing. Realism is

obviously the top priority throughout and DID has gone to great lengths to ensure that the geography of the game is based on actual geographical locations reproduced from military charts, maps and plans. An artificial intelligence battlefield generation program adds even more to the level of authenticity.

Although the real EF2000 (Euro Fighter 2000) is not expected to see service until the next century, the game adopts a rather limited and predictable communist takeover scenario set in the not too distant future. A Russian force is attempting to seize control of Norway and Sweden as a foothold into Northern Europe and must be stopped. This could indicate that more than one mission disc can be expected to follow a short time after the game is released proper. As well as flying solo, players will be able to opt to fly with up to four "intelligent" wing men and take part in sophisticated air-to-air and air-to-ground missions in a player environment

that covers a massive, target-rich, four million square kilometres.

It goes without saying that the flight model will be absolutely spot on. Rumours

abound that NATO has expressed an interest in the graphics engine used in the game. Realistic mode avionics will make the game challenging to experts, while automated avionics that are featured in the actual aircraft make it easily accessible to novices.

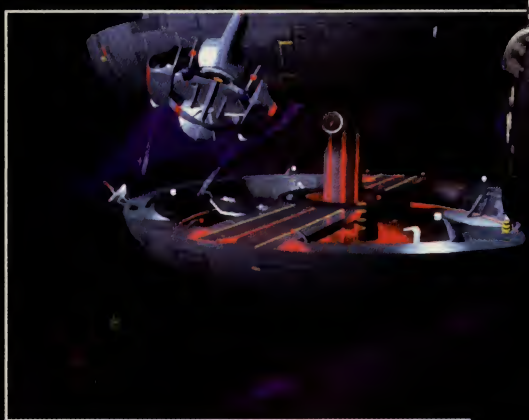
Both SVGA and VGA graphic modes will be supported and, although the minimum machine specification is an optimistic DX2-66 with a recommended 8Mb of RAM, happily the game should be fully programmable to run on lower spec systems.

If you're a Pentium owner, however, you will be able to revel in what is being pitched as "the fastest and most detailed 3D world ever presented in a combat flight simulation" at the controls of a futuristic fighter that has already been dubbed by those in the know as "the ultimate in current warfare aircraft" when it is released in September.



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Comet - Game - HMV - PC World - Silica - Staples - Virgin and leading software retailers

(Right) *Agile Warrior* — is it a *Descent* hybrid or just another multi-player flight sim?

(Below) The ultra violent and bloody *Urban Decay* will make *Ecstatica* look like Richard and Judy.



Agile Warrior: F-111X

Already being described as a perfect showcase for the new Sony super-console, *Agile Warrior: F-111X* will hopefully prove to be just as fruity and irresistible when it's released on the PC a couple of months following its debut on the PlayStation.

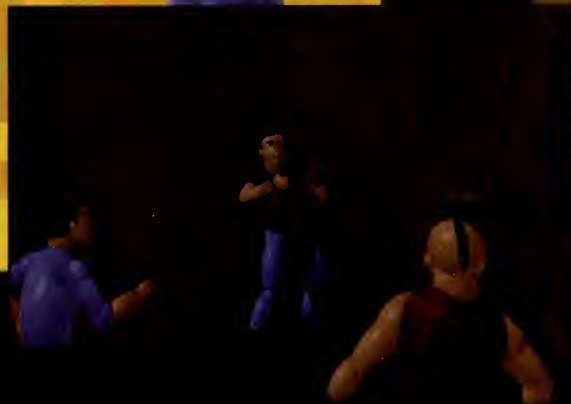
Sounding distinctly *Descent*-ish, *F-111X* is a multi-player combat adventure game set above the ground. The player takes on the role of a top fighter pilot bloke who is part of an elite covert squadron which is despatched to deal with hot spots around the world. Equipped with high tech hybrid aircraft (based on actual top secret designs "obtained" from the US Government, or so it says here) the squadron must tackle missions ranging from bombing and ground assaults to dog fights and specialised surgical strikes (ooh matron).

The game reputedly boasts more than 20 minutes of cinematic sequences blended with live-action video and a real-time 3D texture-mapped environment. It features numerous camera angles, and more high-tech weaponry than you can shake a P-90 PDW at, including TV guided missiles, MK20 cluster bombs, various laser guided munitions, and a rather neat bomber cam. *Agile Warrior: F-111X* will be published by Virgin and is due for release later this year.

Urban Decay

ANDREW SPENCER'S FOLLOW up to *Ecstatica* was arguably the name of the game on everyone's lips who was lucky enough to attend the recent E3 show in LA. Although *Urban Decay* looks very much like a detailed *Ecstatica* (thanks to some rather splendid svGA graphics) the ellipsoid polygoned characters now move and leap about the screen with even more verve and gusto. And there's gameplay by the bucket-load thanks to a plot that is set in a ghetto hell of guns, girls and gore. It's already been described as a "John Wu meets *Die Hard*" action-fest experience, and if we are to believe the hype, the graphic and violent nature of the whole project should earn Spencer the accolade of the Quentin Tarantino of the games world and a reputation for gratuitous gore with the censors when it is released in the Summer of '96.

(Left) The new hi-res ellipsoid polygoned characters already make *Ecstatica* look positively dated.



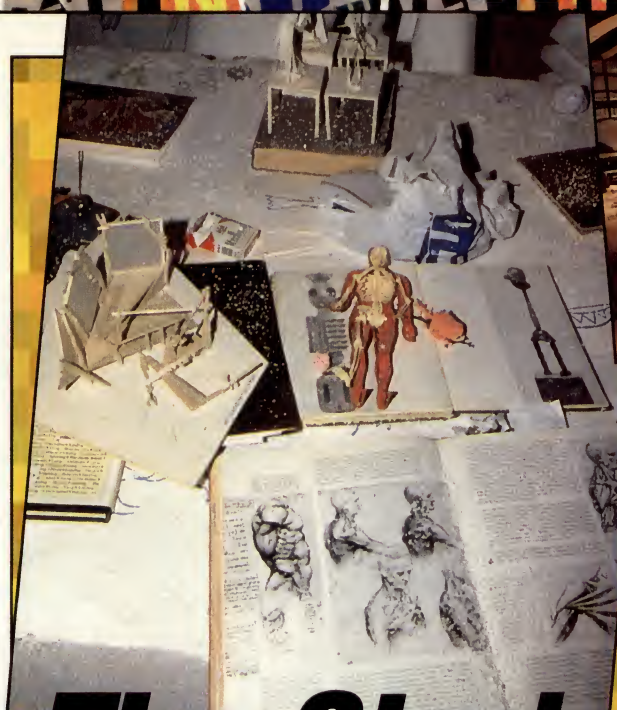
Battle Beast

Yet another "unique" beat 'em up makes its way on to the PC, and this one has more than (gosh!) 400 sound effects, plus a soundtrack from the chap behind the *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers* music (gasp!).

Boasting "feature quality animation" and "non-stop action", a spokesperson for the developer, 7th Level, claimed that "with its revolutionary depth of gameplay" it's "unlike any other arcade-style game on the PC." (*I thought you said it was a beat 'em up?* Ed.)

Beyond the blurb lies a rather spooksome, comic book-style plot. The player must destroy the evil toadman and his minions, which means hand-to-hand fisticuffs, sniffing out secret rooms where players can exchange fight moves and charming high tech weaponry ("pulverising plasma bursts" and "the always-rank rat puke"), and then a final confrontation with the evil toadman himself.

Packed with more than 8,000 frames of hand-drawn animation (more than any beat 'em up ever, apparently), a rather wicked enemy AI and a cornucopia of special moves and configurations, it might just manage to wrestle free from the constraints of unreliability when it is released in August.



The Star's the Limit

ELECTRONIC ARTS HAS STARTED FILMING THE LIVE ACTION sequences of *The Darkening*, which is due for release in February next year. The release is going ahead despite losing two of the major stars (no less than Harvey Keitel and Ollie Reed), who failed to sign on the dotted line before the cut-off date, well after filming began.

Filming for the £4 million game, billed as an "interactive science fiction adventure", started at Pinewood studios at the end of May with star Clive Owen (smoothie-type bloke of TV *Chancer* fame) taking the lead, and weirdy-beardy, laugh-a-lot bloke Brian Blessed, Renta Baddie-bloke Christopher Walken and David McCallum (remember *Sapphire and Steel*? You know the one... Joanna Lumley was in it) taking supporting roles. The game is being pitched as the first of the next generation of interactive movies and will feature a total of 50 main actors, 500 extras and over 30 different film sets, as well as some awesome special effects.

Dispatches

+++ Blade Runner Rights Sold

Virgin has signed what promises to be one of the biggest licence deals of the century. In an exclusive deal with the Blade Runner

Partnership, it has been successful in securing the rights to publish multimedia and interactive products based on the critically acclaimed film. The film was first released 11 years ago, from director Ridley Scott.

The first project, not surprisingly entitled *Blade Runner*, is being developed by Westwood for the Macintosh and PC CD-ROM, and is due for release in the autumn of next year. There are no clear details as to the nature of the first release, although speculation abounds that it might not be a million miles away from *Syndicate*, considering the nature and plot of the movie. Expect screen savers and interactive multimedia products to follow in abundance once the initial product has surfed in on a crest of *Blade Runner* hype and frenzy.



+++ PowerSports Soccer

Psygnosis was showing off its new soccer game at the recent E3 show, where it met with roars of approval, despite 99% of Americans still failing to grasp the basics of the game. Looking not dissimilar to Gremlin's *Actua Soccer*, it uses a fast and versatile new game engine to transport the player on to the pitch, right at the heart of the action, and boasts such niceties as movable camera angles and a management option. Although *PowerSports Soccer* is not due for release until early next year, the code that was up and running at the show hinted that we might be in for a bit of a treat come the spring, especially if the developer can sort out a multi-player network facility that allows players to play on the same side as a team against either the CPU or another online team.

+++ Parasite

Pitched as an adventure game that explores an alternate reality where Raymond Chandler meets William Gibson, *Parasite* is a film noir thriller set for release next year from Psygnosis. Possessed by an alien law enforcer, you are forced to walk the streets in search of an undercover extraterrestrial before the alien mutates your body into a blob of festering sludge. With a fully-rendered 3D city to investigate and puzzles and nasties galore, this should be one to watch out for in '96.

'96 - The Year of Sport?

ELECTRONIC ARTS was going all gooey over the latest *FIFA Soccer* incarnation, imaginatively entitled *FIFA Soccer '96*, which it had on show at E3 recently. Looking more like *FIFA* on the 3DO, with its swirling multiple camera angles and enhanced gameplay, EA reckons it has the most sophisticated computer intelligence ever designed for a soccer simulation. This means that the players actually react to different coaching strategies selected by the user. (What Terry Venables would give! Using your imagination on that could almost be as much fun as the game itself...)

Revolutionary 32-bit technology means that the game is faster than ever. And there's more - stunning new player animations (including diving saves and leaping headers), FMV footage of international games, a commentary by John "Mr Soccer" Motson himself, surround sound effects and a facility to play with three other players over a network or modem mean that this will be the soccer sim to beat when it is released later this year in October.

Also prompting a display of gushiness was *NHL '96*, which has all the latest stats (including the original '94-'95 schedule and the post-strike schedule), four-way network or modem play, enhanced gameplay and sound effects.

PGA Tour 486 is also being brought bang up to date and given the same annual upgrade. This time round players will be able to compete against real *PGA Tour* pros, whose actual swings are in the game. These include Fuzzy Zoeller, Tom Kite and Craig Stadler, who also provide shot by shot commentary for the three TPC courses.

PGA Tour '96 will also feature actual *PGA Tour* film footage, video windows showing golfer reactions, a new interface, multiple pin placements, controllable real-time fly-by views of courses, a new and unique Target Arc System (which allows players to view the flight of the ball prior to the shot) and four-way network and modem play.

You'll have to wait a while for all EA Sports releases, which are projected to hit the shelves in the autumn.

Key

- ▲ Higher position than last month
- ▼ Lower position than last month
- ◆ Same position as last month
- New Entry
- RE Re-Entry

GALLUP CHARTS

What's selling really well at the moment then? Not always what you'd think. Despite what we say in our incredibly informative and exceptionally witty reviews, it still seems that you lot aren't sitting up and paying attention. Some of you obviously have a masochistic desire to waste money...

Top 20 Full Price Titles

1. Ultimate Soccer Manager	●	Impressions
2. Sim City 2000	◆	Maxis
3. TIE Fighter	▲	LucasArts
4. Doom 2	▲	Virgin
5. Discworld	▼	Psygnosis
6. Comanche Super Pack	RE	US Gold
7. Sim Tower	●	Maxis
8. Theme Park	▲	Bullfrog
9. Frontier: First Encounters	▼	Gametek
10. Colonization	▲	MicroProse
11. Overlord	▼	Virgin
12. Premier Manager 3	▼	Gremlin Interactive
13. Rise of the Robots	▼	Mirage/Time Warner
14. TFX	RE	Ocean
15. Aladdin	RE	Virgin
16. The Lion King	▼	Virgin
17. NASCAR	▼	Virgin
18. Microsoft Golf 2 (Win)	RE	Microsoft
19. Descent	RE	Interplay
20. All New World of Lemmings	▼	Psygnosis

Top 10 PC Budget Titles

1. World Class Rugby	●	Audiogenic
2. D Zone	●	One Stop Direct
3. Dune 2	▲	Hit Squad
4. Lottery (Win)	▲	VCI Software
5. Premier Manager 3 Multi-Edit	●	Gremlin Interactive
6. Easy to Learn Computing	●	Premier Collection
7. Descent Demo Disk	▼	Interplay
8. Desert Strike	▼	Gremlin Interactive
9. Word Games for Windows	●	Premier Collection
10. Star Trek: 25th Anniversary	▼	Interplay

Top 10 CD-ROM Titles

1. Flight Unlimited	●	Looking Glass
2. Full Throttle	●	LucasArts
3. Discworld	▼	Psygnosis
4. Virtual Pool	●	Interplay
5. IndyCar Racing	RE	White Label
6. Dark Forces	▼	LucasArts
7. The Civil War	●	Empire
8. Dragon Lore	▼	Mindscape
9. Syndicate Plus	RE	CD-ROM Classics
10. Microsoft Flight Simulator V5.1	●	Microsoft

*Whatever happened
to Peace, Love
& Understanding?*

THE ULTIMATE



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THE ALL NEW, INCREDIBLE EPISODE IV: THY FLESH CONSUMED

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AVAILABLE ON PC & PC CD-ROM

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Dispatches

+++ Gabriel Knight 2

Sierra is also jumping on the sequel train, and recently confirmed it is currently working on a sequel to the mega-successful graphical adventure *Gabriel Knight*. Although details are sketchy as yet, we can reveal that it will sport SVGA graphics, an enhanced interface and all the intensity (as far as plot and puzzles are concerned) of the original.

Sierra also revealed that *Earthsiege 2* and (gulp!) *Earthsiege 3* are in the pipeline. Nothing much on this either, except that we can expect hi-res graphics this time round, and maybe even a multi-player network facility. The developer said it would also like to include a contoured terrain (which, as many square-headed types have already pointed out, is the only reason you'd have a HERC type thing, rather than something with wheels which would move much faster over flat terrain). Let's just hope the sequel doesn't take as long in coming as the terminally late *Mech Warrior 2* from Activision.

+++ Internet First

MJN has just announced that it has secured space in the first pan-European virtual shopping mall, and that people can now buy a PC on-line (presumably on someone else's PC). Potential customers can either browse through the pages and then buy the computer over the telephone, or use the Internet to choose and buy their new PC without calling anybody. The system is all icon-based and is claimed to be very easy to use; to give you peace of mind, credit card details are automatically encrypted using the most secure protection techniques available to prevent fraud.

Contact MJN on 01282 777555 or at <http://www.spend.com:81/mjn/>

+++ Find Loads of Dosh

Apparently, you can win loads of dosh (ten grand to be exact) simply by loading up the *Riddle of the Runes* TSR Screensaver, solving the cryptic clues hidden inside many of the "fantastic" screens and giving US Gold a bell with the answers. It's so simple even Germans are supposed to be able to do it. But because of some rather draconian laws they're not allowed to win any cash, and will have to make do with some crusty old piece of TSR artwork instead. Bummer! Vorsprung durch technik (or something). Contact US Gold on 0121 625 3366 to find out more.



IndyCar Racing 2

PAPYRUS IS GETTING EXTREMELY EXCITED ABOUT its next scheduled release, which is a "graphically and audibly enhanced" version of the spectacular *IndyCar Racing*.

IndyCar 2 will include 15 tracks, representing every type of IndyCar racing experience, and will be based on the 1995 racing season (which will be represented by cars, tracks, drivers, sponsors, trackside scenery, billboards and so on).

Other major improvements will include a "clear and crisp" svga mode, realistic collisions (car bodies will dent and bits will break off),

digital sound effects, realistic handling, multi arcade-style out-of-car views, and a multi-player option (which basically means it's upgraded it to the NASCAR standard).

Stateside, Papyrus has also set up a new multi-player service that allows up to 32 players to race against each other over a modem. Code-named "Hawaii", it's already taking the US by storm and Papyrus is keen to set up a similar facility in the UK as soon as possible. *IndyCar Racing 2* will be published by Virgin Interactive Entertainment and is due for release in October.



Sonic now PC

The "blue dude with a 'tude" is finally to make his debut on the PC – or PCs which conform to Intel's Native Signal Processing (NSP) design specification – now that PC technology can cope with the frenetic demands of high-speed scrolling that have been taken as the accepted norm on consoles for five long years.

Minimum machine specification is said to be at least a P75 ('cos it's so damn fast and fruity). This, coincidentally, is also the spec required to run *Ecco the Dolphin*, which is also due out on the PC at roughly the same time. Both titles are said to be "console perfect" and represent the pinnacle of platforming action. Bet you can't wait!

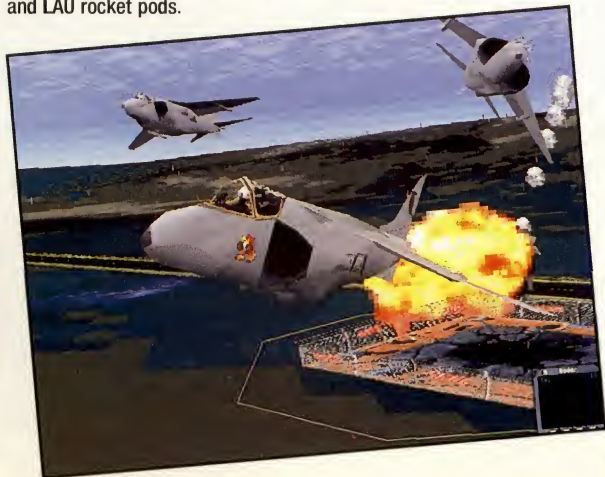


US Navy Fighters Add-On

Fans of the rather luscious *US Navy Fighters* from Electronic Arts will be rather chuffed to hear that *Marine Fighters*, an add-on disc, is planned for release in September.

Set just a few years from now in 1997, a new revolutionary government in Russia is threatening the independent states of the former Soviet Union. The situation escalates drastically and war breaks out in Eastern Europe. In an attempt to divert US attention from the European theatre, the Russians start attacking allied shipping in the Sea of Japan and the North West Pacific.

What this translates to in terms of gameplay is 35 intense new missions (including close support, interdiction, combat air patrols and anti-shipping strikes), three new aircraft (including the US Marine AV-8B Harrier II, the British FRS Mk2 Sea Harrier and the Russian Yak 141 Freestyle) and devastating new weapons such as the Snakeye bomb and LAU rocket pods.





Back from the USSR

So there you are. You've just taken out a second mortgage in order to buy a decent PC. It's sitting there ready for use on your desk: the 16Mb of RAM, the quad-speed CD-ROM player, the SVGA MPEG-compatible video card and the latest 32-bit sound card bursting to be seen over the Pentium 90 sticker on the outside – and what's the next big flight sim to be released? A Russian-built combat sim that runs in EGA and whose recommended machine is a 386DX. Typical.

Okay, *SU27 Flanker* also has a rather snazzy looking SVGA mode and, when running on a more up-to-date machine, looks smoother and more flyable than just about anything we've seen to date in the *PC Zone* dungeons. But the good (and wallet friendly) news is that one of the key features about Mindscape's latest is that you *don't* need a ninjascope PC to play it.

Other features are a campaign and mission planner that would make *Tornado* hang its head in shame, an ultra-realistic flight model and enough artificial intelligence to throw a digital stick at. Everything from single training missions to the planning and execution of a full-scale campaign can be played through in excruciating detail. And you can even design entire campaigns from scratch and distribute them to your (prop-head) friends.

SU27 is due for release in October and we'll have a full *Blueprint* next month. It's enough to make you wonder why the Russians gave up in the first place.

Dispatches

+++ Whoops! There go my Bloomers

PC Zone would like to apologise for any confusion caused over the gremlin that popped into last month's cover review of *Command & Conquer*. This spectacular effort from Westwood is, of course, published by Virgin Interactive Entertainment, tel 0181 960 2255.



+++ Easy-buy Compaqs

Time Computers is knocking out the world's best-selling computer, the Compaq Presario, for a smidgen under £1,550 (plus VAT). Models on offer include either a 486DX2-66 or 486DX4-90 processor with 8Mb of RAM, a 420Mb hard disk, a quad-speed CD-ROM drive, fax modem, sound card and SVGA monitor. Both versions are preloaded with a selection of software; interest free monthly installments are also an option. Contact Time on 01282 777111.

+++ On-Line Footie

Team 17 has just launched an on-line footie management game that allows you to play against real people. It will come as no surprise that it's called *Interactive Football League*.

It's basically a slick rip-off of fantasy football league, which you either play on-line or send your directions on floppy by post.

Each season (of 22 games, or five months) will cost you £20 to play, and the winner of the conference will receive a cash prize of £500. There will also be prizes for winning cup matches and a manager of the month table. Contact Team 17 on 01924 267776 for details.



+++ TSR go with Interplay

Interplay announced a new licensing agreement with fantasy legends TSR to produce computer games based on the immensely popular AD&D role playing games. The deal, which includes the rights to produce games under the *Forgotten Realms* and *Planescape* banners, has prompted Interplay to set up a special internal division that will be solely responsible for producing future TSR-based projects. Interplay maintains that it will use the licence to produce games of all genres, including strategy, simulation and action. The first games are expected to become available in the autumn.

F1 GP2

THE LONG-AWAITED SEQUEL TO WHAT IS STILL regarded by many as the best racing simulation of all time was being displayed in all its glory to a gaping mass of tongue-lolling journalists, only too keen to get into the driving seat at the E3 show in LA.

No code was on show to play with, however. Those foolish hacks were goggling at a promo video. But we can reveal that it uses advanced texture-mapping and light sourcing techniques that make the cars "shine" and glisten in the sunlight as they roar around the track, and that the sound has been given an overhaul. The AI has also been improved so that opposition drivers now have individual personality traits (such as aggressive or passive driving, impatience or a liking for dirty tricks) and the cars now race in a full

pitching and rolling environment (which means banked corners to you and me). So players will have to contend with differing levels of speed and traction as well as nut-job opponents.

As well as a rather nice new "hazing effect" and a choice of three different race modes, there's going to be a full one-lap replay option (which enables you to save a lap to disk and then view it from any camera angle), 16 circuits (redesigned for greater realism), five different skill levels (the more difficult including such delights as engine blow-outs and sand traps), different cockpits for different cars and the option to race head-to-head over a modem or serial link.

Formula 1 Grand Prix 2 is published by MicroProse and is scheduled for release in September.

(Left) SVGA graphics and realistic handling will make *F1GP2* the racing sim to beat when it is released later this year. MicroProse is also rumoured to be developing a *Super Bike* racing sim due for release early in '96.

(Right) Remember the adage "Silicon Graphics doth not a fab game make"? Lets hope the developers behind *Alien Alliance* do.



Dispatches

+++ Bravo for Primax

Primax has decided to advance further into the PC peripheral market with the launch of the Bravo Soundcard, a 16-bit, 20-voice FM synthesis card. The price tag is a competitive £89.99, it's easy to install and compatible with Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and the Microsoft Windows Sound System.

If you're a bit more creative and fancy making some serious sounds of your own, however, there's also the SoundStorm Wavetable Card which works with wavetable synthesis and allows you to compose "high quality music" on your PC. For a smidgen under the magic £150, the card has a 32-voice wavetable synthesis, 16 stereo channels and 192 general MIDI instruments. All prices are inclusive of VAT. For more information contact Primax on 01494 680555.



+++ Flashback 2

Electronic Arts has revealed that the project formerly known as *Crossfire* (from the developers Delphine Software) and now called *Fade To Black* is in fact the sequel to the revolutionary *Flashback*. But because US Gold owns the rights to *Flashback*, EA can't call it *Flashback 2*. It can use the main character, Conrad B. Hart, however, and EA assures us that the sequel will be *Flashback 2* in every sense but the name. Due for release in September, it features a new 3D engine, an SVGA mode and benefits from a much richer and deeper storyline than its predecessor. They've beefed up the combat sequences too.



+++ UAKM 2

US Gold recently confirmed that a sequel to the revolutionary graphical adventure from Access, *Under A Killing Moon*, is on the way.

Mysteriously entitled *The Pandora Device*, it will include loads of real actors (as opposed to Margot Kidder and that big fat bloke), stunning special effects and an enhanced user interface that makes use of the latest high-end technology now available to Pentium users. No other details are available as yet, although the sequel is expected for release late next year.

To Boldly Go (Again)

The much hyped 3D blaster based on William Shatner's *Tekwar* novels looks about as inspiring as a rainy day in Braintree – which is not at all surprising really, when you consider the lame works of (science) fiction it's so loosely based on.

Using an "enhanced" version of the *Rise of the Triad* engine (called *Build* from Apogee) it promises to be more mission-based with (yawn) specific targets and strategies, and will even (snore) include FMV footage of the Kirkman himself, who will pop up via your video wristwatch to debrief you at regular intervals throughout the game.

Tekwar is due for release in the autumn from US Gold.



Alien Alliance

A catchy title you might think, for what looks like being yet another unremarkable futuristic shoot 'em up set in deep space – except, that is, until you see the quite wondrous SG rendered graphics that will put all other games of this genre to shame.

Strategy will also play a major part in what promises to be a deep game in every respect as the player embarks on top secret covert missions in an attempt to find out why an increasing number of allied ships are disappearing from the galaxy. It promises to be vast, with loads of different missions to complete, a wicked enemy AI, and did we mention the graphics? Well, nuff said.

Alien Alliance will be published by Virgin and is scheduled for release at the end of the year.



Outpost Pinball

CALL IT QUIRKY, BUT SIERRA HAS JUST RELEASED details of a new 3D pinball game based on its very own strategy-fest *Outpost*.

Designed to run under Windows, it borrows both art and plot from the hit strategy game, and players are rewarded with hundreds of bonus animations and power-ups for hitting specific targets and completing various tasks.

There are five different play fields in all, which can be accessed by hitting certain entrance doors, and players will be able to go inside various buildings and interact with the different machines that make up the command centre.

As well as being stunningly original, Sierra reckons that this is the slickest and most realistic pinball game ever developed for the PC, courtesy of some wicked new code.

Sierra also let slip that it is currently working on a sequel to *Outpost*, and maintains that it's the best thing since the baker started cutting up his loaves, thanks to a newly developed game engine and enhanced AI.

Sierra Ultra Pinball: *Outpost Odyssey* is due for release in September.



Toonstruck

FAR FROM BEING JUST ANOTHER INTERACTIVE movie thing with a famous name and jerky, non-interactive FMV, *Toonstruck*, (currently in development at Virgin) uses a combination of traditional animation, hand-painted background settings, digital animation and state-of-the-art digital betacam footage to bring together all the intensity and realism of live action footage with the fantastical splendour of a computer-generated player environment.

Borrowing heavily from the likes of both *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* and *Cool World*, the story centres around Drew Blanc (played by Christopher Lloyd of *Back to the Future* fame), an animator on the Saturday morning *Fluffy Bun Bun Show*. Blanc is suffering from a tremendous case of creative block. Through a freak accident, he is transported into a freaky cartoon world, split into three very different kingdoms. One is governed by the benevolent King Hugh, and is populated by the cute and cuddly characters from the *Fluffy Show*. Another is ruled by the sinister Count Nefarious (voiced by Tim Curry), and is inhabited by weird and sadistic characters. The third kingdom, Zanydu, is inhabited by Drew's very own creations.

The plot then takes a distinct Oz-like turn. Drew strikes up a deal with the cuddly King Hugh, who promises to help him get back to reality if he helps save his realm from Nefarious and his temperament-altering Malevolator. Make

way for plenty of slapstick comedy and lame gags as the player guides Drew through the twisted lands of Malevolands, Cutopia and Zanydu, solving wacky puzzles, setting booby-traps and battling the wicked Count Nefarious in an attempt to get home.

The game (which is being billed as a the first CD-ROM game that enables players to actually control a live actor) makes use of some revolutionary new motion-tracking and morphing techniques to give the impression of a fully controllable live-action character who is capable of fully interacting with his environment. Looks like we're definitely not in Kansas any more.

Toonstruck is due for release later in the year in November and will be published by Virgin.

(Left) Cartoon capers a-plenty mixed in with live action footage – a recipe for success or technical disaster?

(Below) "Star" voice characterisations should make it one to watch out for.

Psychic Detective

Interactive movies, cinematic adventures, call them what you will, have never really been up to much on the PC. But that could all change if we're to believe the hype behind *Psychic Detective*, a new "interactive comedy/thriller movie" from Electronic Arts and Colossal Pictures, with a script by screenwriter Michael Kaplan.

Shot on location in San Francisco, the game includes five hours of live action footage and incorporates an innovative new user interface that allows the player to interact with the environment and replay certain scenes with different results thanks to "revolutionary" new processing techniques.

The production team behind the project (Colossal Pictures) specialises in quixotic animation, stop motion and special effects. It has a credit list longer than Frank Bruno's arm, that includes *Natural Born Killers* and the recently released *Tank Girl*, so it should, in theory, look fantastic. But we'll have to wait until the end of the year to find out whether there's gameplay hidden in the gloss.



The Need For Speed

The shiftsome arcade classic is finally winging its way on to the PC thanks to a new partnership between *Road & Track* magazine and Electronic Arts.

The PC conversion should include all the wonderful features of the 3DO classic, such as a choice of eight cars (including a Porsche 911 Turbo, Lamborghini Diablo, Mazda RX-7 etc.), three different views (in-car, tail-cam and heli-cam), super smooth, fast and realistic graphics (thanks to a new 3D engine and photo-realistic, SGI-rendered track models), and an accurate physics model, finely tuned by experts from the aforementioned publication.

There will also be the option to play head-to-head over an eight-way network, check what car does what best, thanks to a stats and graphs option (compiled by car "experts" of said magazine), four different

racing modes, thunderous surround sound, a replay facility and oodles of FMV clips of the real cars in action on the track. *The Need For Speed* is due for release in August on CD-ROM.



Dispatches

+++ LucasArts Doomed Again

LucasArts is currently working on yet another 3D shoot 'em up, this time called *Calla 2095*. The new game uses the splendid *Dark Forces* engine and mixes in some Manga-style graphics with some of the more traditional adventuring concepts such as information gathering and puzzle solving. *Calla 2095* is due for release in December.



+++ Easy For Two To Play

Two player games are always a bit naff if you've only got one joystick port and one of you is forced to use the keyboard. Dual port cards are one solution, but they're sometimes a pain to fit (you have to start disabling jumpers) and they also take up a valuable slot inside your PC. Wouldn't it be nice if you could just plug in a dual port adaptor that you didn't need to configure, that enabled you to plug two joysticks or gamepads straight into your PC? Well, now you can, thanks to the new Alfatwin Duo Joystick Adaptor. Retailing at a reasonable £24.99, it's compatible with most two button peripherals and, even better, it's a doddle to fit. For further details contact Golden Image on 0181 900 9291.

+++ Wetlands

This distinctly comic book-ish action packed shoot 'em up from New World Computing is looking rather dandy, thanks to some rather spesh graphics, despite it being another "game on rails".

The good news is you do get to choose your route (albeit occasionally) and zap loads of aliens with a pump-action laser-shot gun-type thing. Not exactly original, but nice to watch nevertheless. A bit like *The New Adventures of Superman* really. *Wetlands* will be published by US Gold and is due for release in September.



SuperKarts

SUPERKARTS is a white knuckle,
roller coaster ride of explosive karting action.
Experience the cut and thrust
of the urban race track,
as your super fast turbo kart screams past
at over 100 mph!
Just jump into the heart pumping hot seat,
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THROUGH
THE KEYHOLE



(Above) This time round all the characters are true 3D as opposed to flat, texture-mapped, soulless creatures.

ANYONE ELSE WOULD HAVE CHUCKED ME out of their office by now. I'm sitting here playing computer games at ten o'clock at night on someone else's network, yet no one is batting an eyelid. Thing is, no one here seems to want to go home, either.

But this appears to be the norm at Apogee: "We all play the games in production. If a game has network or modem play like *Rise of the Triad* or *Terminal Velocity*, you can regularly find people playing after work until three or four in the morning!" gushes an enthusiastic play-tester. Great. Cancel my hotel for me, will you?

A few hours ago I arrived at this anonymous office block in the back end of a suburb at the back end of Dallas. The taxi driver had to drive past three

times before we spotted the building. But hey! It's what's on the inside that counts, right? If you want impressive buildings, why not try the glorious 3D buildings on the PC network inside. These buildings you can jump on top of, run in the sewers underneath, fly around, and ultimately blow up completely. Very satisfying.

I'm here to find out more about Apogee's new division, 3D Realms Entertainment – a division that was set up to fill a demand that you, dear readers, created. George Broussard, president of 3D Realms, talked me through the new division and the tasty new morsels they'll soon be throwing to the game-playing public.

I thought I might as well kick off the interview with an easy question, so I asked George why he thought everyone was getting off on 3D, and also what 3D Realms hopes to achieve: "3D games represent the way we all live in real life. They are the most immersing games possible and people will always play the good ones. That is why Apogee started this new division. 3D Realms will only publish high-end 3D games in the future. Nothing else."

Hmm, methinks this company needs watching because it's got an attitude – and a damn fine one at that. George goes on, "3D Realms will only make new and different games. We're not interested in doing things that have been done before. In every game we'll



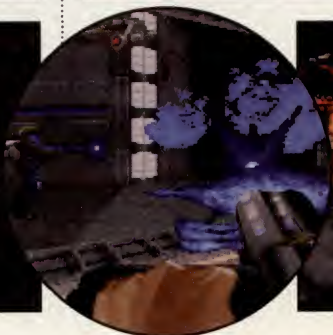
try to add new things that 3D players have never been able to do. Gamers need something different and unique or they won't play." You said it, bud!

Rise (and fall) of the Triad

Most recently, Apogee released the 3D shoot 'em up *Rise of the Triad*. *Rise* was fun (for "fun" read "gory"), but it was really only a taster of things to come. Apogee (and its UK publisher US Gold) is gearing up for some truly amazing releases over the next few months – a process that has already started with the shareware release of *Terminal Velocity*. *Duke Nukem 3D* (a first person, 3D shoot 'em up of mega proportions) should appear a couple of months later; *Shadow Warrior* (a ninja-style game along similar lines) some time after that; and then there's *Blood* (a Gothic horror-based game) and *Ruins* (an Indiana Jones-style adventure game), both due for release later next year.

I'll cut the crap: these games will make your fingers burn, but still 3D Realms refuses to stand still – don't you

(Right & below) Both *Terminal Velocity* and *Duke Nukem* use an enhanced Build engine, an earlier version of which was used in *Triad*. Neither engine will be used again – they're already working on new stuff that's much better!





George? "We typically write new engines from scratch every time, so we can do things better and faster. The Rise engine will never be used again and neither will the Terminal Velocity engine. In addition to the releases we've got coming out now, we're already working on two brand new 3D engines."

Play It again (and again) man...

The real reason these games work is that the guys who make them do actually sit down and play them. Who cares about RPGs or strategy games? Ask yourself what kicks. What gives you that buzz? It's guns isn't it? Guns, explosions, running down corridors to blow a hole in some mutant, and that feeling that you're there, doing it for real. That's what really matters, and Apogee is getting closer and closer to "it" all the time.

Take Duke Nukem 3D. It's not just the mind-blowing graphics, it's the little touches of gameplay that give it an edge. You can catch a tube to other parts of the complex and blow out windows and watch people get sucked out into the vacuum. Best of all, it includes a gun that you can set to expand or shrink your enemies to death. Plus you're going to be able to build your own levels like never before.

The shopfloor (or programming room) at Apogee is where I get my first sighting of 3D Realms' new Build engine



(Above) The level editor is very advanced and a doddle to use.

(Above left) First you lay out your basic design using a 2D wire frame map, and then you add ramps and the art in true 3D. Simple or what?

in its natural habitat. When Duke is released, you'll get your grubby little hands on exactly the same engine and, by letting you edit in 3D, it'll be a piece of cake to use. Just ask George: "With the level editor for the Build games we wanted the designers to be able to edit in 3D as well as 2D. You draw lines and things in 2D to construct a map, but you can then go into 3D to raise or lower areas, change art on the walls, all sorts."

So where did this rather juicy bit of software come from? "The Build engine and editor were developed by Ken Silverman, one of our resident engine gurus." (Ken is 19 and looks like a beanpole in sensible shoes, but appearances can be deceptive.)

"He made a couple of shareware games and we contacted him to do engines for us. You'll see his work in Duke Nukem 3D in a couple of months."

Ken doesn't drive a Corvette... yet.

3D Realms is, if you like, the heart of the American drugs industry. These guys are pushing adrenaline, endorphins and serotonin, and if you're not hooked already, then you're not playing the right games.

Me, I'm playing just the right games and I'm staying. You can switch the lights off, just leave the network running. See you on Monday. **Z**



(Above) Ken Silverman, "3D engine guru" and all round super teenager. Offers of marriage are currently flooding in.

Duke Nukem 3D

Easily the most promising of the next generation of first person, 3D shoot 'em ups yet seen. The graphics are stunning in both response and detail, but what really sets it apart is its gameplay. You can kick out air vents on the walls and crawl around the air-conditioning shafts, or lay mines in buildings and set them off when you're outside – destroying the building and all the other players in it. Network games should be unreal. Watch out for the awesome, but idiot-proof 3D level editor that will come with the full game. Release Date: This Autumn.



Rise of the Triad

Another first person perspective, 3D shoot 'em up and the first to use the 3D Realms engine. It's swiftly becoming a classic – you're probably going to sit down and play it as soon as you've finished reading this. If you do, double the graphics, triple the gameplay and excitement, and that's Duke Nukem 3D.

Release Date: If you haven't already got it, switch off now.

Blood and Ruins

These are early game shots, but they should still get your juices flowing.

Release Date: Sometime before the end of the year, allegedly.



Terminal Velocity

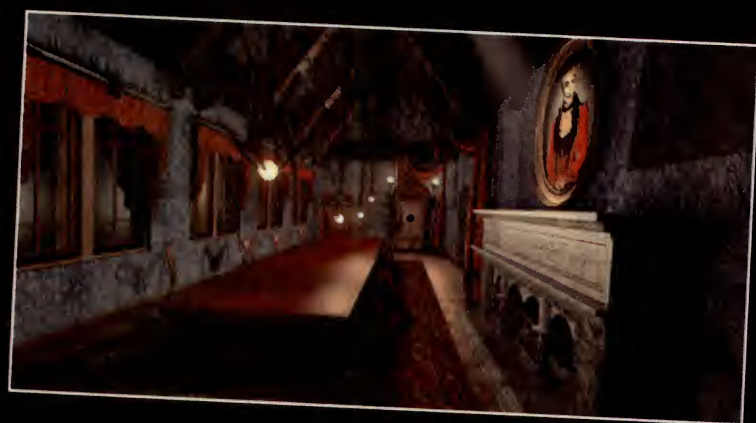
The shareware version has only recently hit an Internet site near you, but it's already making big waves. It's Magic Carpet with decent weapons, but yet again there is a further dimension to the action. Flying over a detailed textured landscape is one thing, but you can also nip down an extensive tunnel

at the end of each level just to tip you over the endorphin edge. Flight sim it may be, Microsoft it ain't. If it moves (or doesn't), shoot it. It's networkable too.

Release Date: Shareware version available at BBS No. 001 508 368 7036. Full version available from US Gold in September.



Apogee 3D Realms Games are distributed exclusively by US Gold. For More Information call them on 0121 606 1800.



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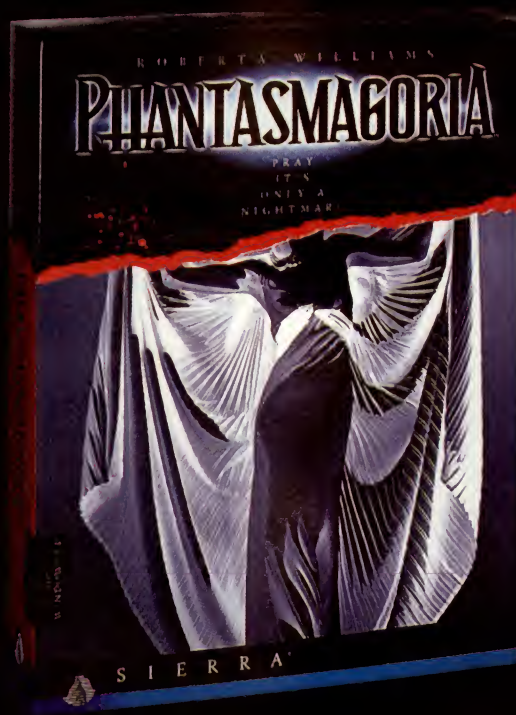
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I feel its presence, icy fingers upon my throat.
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Magic Carpet 2

Part One

(Right) The quality of the rendered animations are far superior to those in the original... And this is really saying something because *Magic Carpet* had some stunning cut-scenes.

An award-winning best seller like *Magic Carpet* is tough to top, but Bullfrog is working very hard to do just that. John Davison takes a look at the game in the first part of our "serialised preview" sort of thing.

MAGIC CARPET EH? AHH. GLORIOUS silky-smooth rolling landscapes, the undulating and tranquil sea, the mysterious magic and the er, death, violence, destruction and unshackled aggression. *Doom* in

pyjamas, and one of the most popular games of the last year. A sequel was inevitable really, but is there really anything that Bullfrog could do to make it better?

Well, yes, frankly. I don't want to burst the bubble or anything here, but to be blunt *Magic Carpet* wasn't exactly perfect, was it? Come on. Be honest. I know we all look at it through rose-tinted spectacles, but the thing had its problems. For a start, it was always a little vague on the objectives front, and it was quite stupidly difficult. The average mortal could get to about level 25, but only ninja games players and journalists hung like donkeys stood a chance of getting anywhere near the elusive level 50. And as for that add-on disk, *Hidden Worlds!* Bloody hell.

Vive la différence!

So, what's new then? Well, for a start there are some new "moody bits" that include night time levels, and some



underground bits. These both give the game considerably more atmosphere. The graphics engine has been enhanced enormously to accommodate these features, and we now have some truly glorious lighting effects which make the whole thing seem very spooky.

On top of this the spell system has been enhanced dramatically to incorporate experience-related spell enhancements (which means that as you use a spell more, you get better with it and can thus make use of more powerful versions of it), and eight totally new spells. If you thought that some of the stuff in the first game was whacky, just wait until you see some of the new 'uns. The most spectacular of the new spells is a little beauty known as the Gravity

Well, which sucks everything around it into a big hole in the ground before spitting it out in the form of a big mana ball. Wow. Elsewhere we have the whirlwind, which is an, er... whirlwind (what else?) and a crafty little number called Fools Mana which allows you to scatter golden mana balls around the landscape which then explode in other players' faces when they try to possess them. The new spells coupled with the experience

Product details

Developer: Bullfrog

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Telephone: 01753 549442

Format: CD-ROM

Release date: August

(Right) One of the major differences with the in-game graphics is that there are now a lot of scenes set at night. These all feature some stunning lighting effects.



Stuff you probably didn't know about Magic Carpet

Well, it's just one particular thing really, but it's quite important. As we said earlier, the original game was bloody hard and virtually no one managed to get to the last level... which is probably a good thing. Why? Well, it's because there's a bug at

the end of level 50 which means you can't finish the game. Good eh? It gets better though.

Upon realising this horrid, horrid bug, Bullfrog re-mastered the game and sent it to Electronic Arts to be re-duplicated. Everyone thought that everything was

now fab and groovy, until a tester tried out the new game and found that the bug was still there. Argh! In a boo-boo to end all boo-boos, it seems that the wrong version went to duplication again! Oops. Apparently it's all sorted out now though.

related "spell power-up" system means that there are more than 70 new effects in *Carpet 2*.

Zombies 'n' stuff

Obviously with all of that magical hardware (or are spells software? Hmm...) you're going to want plenty of stuff to shoot at, and thankfully there are now 23 different creatures that roam the lands. All of the original monsties are knocking around, but they are now joined by the Zombies, the huge stone-head like Sentinels and the multi-headed

Hydras, which are all decidedly hard and tough. For added fun, though, one of the new spells in your armoury allows you to cast a possession spell over any creature and command it to do your bidding, which, as I'm sure you can imagine, can make combat rather enjoyable!

Coming in part 2...

Next month you can tune into the second part of our preview where we'll be telling you about the new level structure and the background story to the product. We'll also be able to bring you an exclusive playable demo of the game; so you can see for yourself just how impressive it's looking. **Z**



(Above) Some of the new monsties are distinctly nasty. This chap, the Hydra, has more heads than anyone could possibly know what to do with.



(Right) Our hero strides purposefully through the marketplace desperately trying to pick up chicks.

(Bottom left) Oh my god, it's the bloke from the first game. Hang on, I thought he was dead.

Tech alert

Magic Carpet is well known for its processor power gobbling antics, but it's good to know that things are changing. Despite the fact that *Carpet 2* is far more complex than its predecessor, the code for the graphics engine is now so efficient that it actually runs much faster on a 486DX33. For once a developer is thinking of the lowlier machines as well as the Pentiums and DX4s of this world.



Rug rats



It's always nice to have an imaginative picture of a development team, and here's one of the best we've had in recent months...
 Front Row: Sean Masterson (level designer), Chris Hill (artist)
 Middle Row: Laughing at the haircuts in front of them, Alan Wright (lead programmer), Sean Cooper (producer)
 Middle/back Row: Barry Meade (level designer), Eion Rogan (artist)
 Back Row: Russel Shaw (musician)



Crusader: No Remorse



(Left)
SVGA graphics and fully-rendered 3D creatures make it a bit of a visual feast.

(Right)
Advanced character control will let you walk, run, jump, crouch and hide to engage and ambush your enemies.



Those Origin blokes just love their weirdy titles don't they? "So what's this one all about then?" enquires a rather bemused **Jeremy Wells**. And will they have to change the title for the American market?

I'LL GET STRAIGHT TO THE POINT HERE (deep breath). *Little Big Adventure* (developed by Frenchies Adeline and published by Electronic Arts) was, to put it bluntly, the canine's wedding tackle. Not only did it look good and play brilliantly, but it was packed with more humour, plot twists and brilliant animations than your average Tim Burton film. The only thing you might be tempted to raise the slightest nigger about (unless of course you're Frenchophobic) was that there wasn't enough shooting to be done.

Yep, I know it wasn't really that sort of game, but it would have been nice just to pull out a semi-automatic and let

(Far right)
It won't be one long blast-fest. No, there will be puzzle solving elements in there too, you know.

rip at one of those stupid lardy elephant thingies that lollop around carrying rifles, just once or twice. Call me irresponsible (call me unreliable, hey – just call me, okay!), but the whole design and layout of the game was crying out for a bit of 3D isometric shoot 'em up action (like a sort of real-time *UFO*, but with nicer graphics). Just a little would have sufficed so as to satisfy the gun-toting gamesplayer taking a break from *Doom* and not to upset the fluffy bunny brigade. Not exactly a missed opportunity on the part of Adeline, but something to think about for next time, maybe.

I wannit, and I wannit now!

Origin obviously felt the same way, and, being American rather than French, it naturally couldn't produce a game that didn't feature (a) lots of different weapons and (b) lots of people on which to practise using them on.

The result is a game that looks and plays a lot like the aforementioned *LBA* (it too features quite stunning SVGA graphics and a rather nifty character control mode), but with guns. Lots of guns in fact, and lasers and rocket launchers and grenades. You name it, if you can kill or maim somebody with it, it's probably in there. On top of this

Product details

Developer: Origin

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Telephone: 01753 549442

Format: CD-ROM

Release date: April '96

there are robots that you can commandeer who will quite happily trot (or hover) off and kill for you, as well as no end of power-ups to stumble across and weapon enhancers to buy. What's more, the player environment is fully interactive and damage results from every round fired. Like it quite proudly states in the pre-release blurb: "If you can see it, you can shoot it."

There are puzzles too, however, just in case you get fed up with shooting at baddies (and oil drums and robots and lights), or you run out of ammo. And if you combine this with over one and a half hours of FMV (to link all the action together) and a rather useful teleport system that transports you to different parts of the massive 16-level playing arena, it all starts to look rather jolly.

Not so much *LBA* Part Two with Knobs On, more *LBA* Now I'm Mad and I've Got a Gun. God bless America. **Z**



What's buggin' you, big boy?

Being a bit of a good egg, with principles and all, you've defected from the Consortium because you were disgusted at the way they went about misusing their political clout to suppress the good people of the land. (Sound familiar?)

As a result you've decided to jump ship and join the

North American Resistance to help in the fight for justice and political equality in the land of the free. Trouble is, the NAR leaders think you might be a spy sent by the Consortium to sneak on rebel operations. To make sure you're who you say you are, they employ your combat skills to fight the

Consortium via a seemingly endless tour of dangerous mission after mission. Only when you've proved yourself in combat time and time again will they come to respect you and your changed ideals. Cue endless shooting and mindless violence in the name of freedom.

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Note: The shareware version of **Terminal Velocity** is a subset of the full game and contains only 3 of the planets. The shareware CD-ROM version does include cinematics.



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Rise 2: Resurrection

Widely criticised as being the most over-hyped game of all time, *Rise of the Robots* was one of those games that really didn't hit the mark. John Davison takes a look at the sequel to discover if things are actually going to be any better this time.



RISE OF THE ROBOTS LOOKED GREAT. C'mon, admit it... you may feel somewhat prejudiced against it for whatever reason, but if there was one area in which it excelled, it was the presentation. Fab cut-scenes, groovy sprites, wicked backdrops – it's just a shame that the gameplay was er... shite. Things (we hope) are going to be very different this time, though, and the original development team is currently beaver away in a small, dark hole in Cheshire to produce what it thinks will be the definitive robot beat 'em up.

Resurrection or re-hash?

The storyline that's behind *Rise 2* has been very carefully worked out by the programmers, but to be honest, it's of little significance to the game.

After the total carnage of the original battle, the Supervisor has now gone absolutely bonkers and is building new robots with which to try and take over the world. Unfortunately, due to the introduction of the ego-virus (the same virus that went on throughout the story of *Rise 1*) into the system, the robots are no longer fighting for a common cause. Oh no, now all that any of them care about is asserting their dominance by

thumping the living daylights out of anything that moves.

Instead of playing the "lone-warrior" role like last time, *Rise 2* sees you simply choosing a robot with which to fight and then going into battle. This is a far more traditional idea and is the first welcome addition to the game concept. And from what we've seen so far there is quite a number of improvements in the new game. Obviously a lot of these are things which really should have been in the original game but weren't. So, on the whole, it seems that *Rise 2* is shaping up to be a far more "complete" game than its predecessor.

"...the team has finally twigged that there were some fundamental problems with the original game and has consequently fixed 'em."

So what have we got now then? For starters there are now 12 basic characters as opposed to the original seven, and we're reliably informed that there are a further 36 (yes... 36!) hidden away in there too. Quite how you get to these extra characters is unclear as yet, but talking to Gary Leach, the senior programmer on the project, it was revealed that the bonus features in the game will mainly be "rewards" for gameplaying excellence. To be honest (again) we don't think Gary has actually made his mind up yet, but further probing revealed

that things would probably appear if you manage to move through all 11 opponents without losing a single bout. Tricky... but possible.

Aside from the ludicrous numbers of new robots, it would appear that all of the original characters have been spruced up somewhat with such things as extra bolt-on bits and obligatory go-faster stripes.

The Cyborg (the hero) seems to have undergone a series of collagen injections and now has the biggest thighs you have ever seen. The Loader has a new paint job and some serious looking hardware strapped to each

shoulder, and Prime 8 (the one that looks like an ape, funnily enough) now has a huge, extremely vicious looking hydraulic ram thing attached to its arm.

Special stuff

It's not just new characters that make *Rise 2* a bit better, though. Nope – the team has finally twigged that there were some fundamental problems with the original and has consequently fixed 'em. For a start, you can now jump over your opponent and fight him from the other side. It was pretty unbelievable

(Right) Unlike the original, *Rise 2* allows you to actually jump over your opponents.

(Far right) The new robots look significantly "harder" than the old guys. Check out the Samurai!



Product details

Developer: Mirage
Publisher: Mirage
Telephone: 01260 299909
Format: CD-ROM
Release date: August

that you couldn't do this before, but hey... it's fixed now.

Secondly, there are now oodles of special moves, which can be accessed using some seriously *Street Fighter*-ey, joystick jiggy pokery. All the characters now have fireball/sonic boom-style weapons as well as all kinds of well 'ard throws, punches and psycho-weirdy moves. The pre-release blurb boasts of more than 20 special attacks for each character. Now that's a lot of finger-fumbling to come to terms with by anyone's standards.

Beyond this, however, many of the improvements are purely cosmetic. The backgrounds now feature some nice animated bits, the ground scrolls by in glorious parallax, there are loads of new cut-scenes and, tah-dah, it's got

(Background) All of the robots are constructed in 3D Studio on the PC. They are first built as a wire-frame "mesh" before...

(Below) ...being rendered as a shiny blemish-free image.

(Far Below) Once all of this is done the texture maps are added to give the robot detailed characteristics.

Moody programmer pictures



It's not always possible to bring you pictures of the chaps responsible for knocking games together, but thankfully we managed to snatch this shot of the *Resurrection* team.

GARY LEACH
 Gary is the head programming bod on the project, and is responsible for bonding the whole thing together and making sure that it all works perfectly.

ANDY CLARKE
 Andy is the other senior programmer on the project, and is quite evidently a very brainy chap. As far as we can tell he does all of the bits that Gary doesn't... er, if you know what we mean.

SEAN NADEN
 Sean is the senior artist on *Resurrection* and is mainly responsible for constructing the robots for the cut scenes and the game itself

using 3D Studio. When we visited the offices he had just completed work on a robot which he had named after himself.

KWAN LEE
 Kwan, like the rest of the team members, is reprising his role from the original and is busy designing the backdrops for the project. This time his creations will feature animations and parallax scrolling.

a soundtrack by Brian May. Yep, if you thought that the bits culled from Bri's *Back to the Light* album in *Rise 1* were good, you'll go simply gooey over the original recordings that ol' curly-top has produced for this.

Is it enough?

I have to admit that I wasn't really expecting to be *that* impressed with *Rise 2*, but I can safely say that I was quite shocked by the early development code that the Mirage boys showed me. The graphics are significantly better this time round, the gameplay is infinitely superior (there are a few "borrowed" *Street Fighter II* and *Mortal Kombat*-type

elements, which really make the whole thing work well), and the overall "feel" of the game seems to be much better than before.

The original game had the misfortune of being one of the first beat 'em ups of any significance on the PC and was quickly superseded by the "big guys" from the arcades. But having sat back and taken note of the way the market has moved, I think that when *Rise 2* is completed (which should be in a couple of months time) it will be more than capable of holding its own against the likes of *Mortal Kombat III* and any other sprite-based beat 'em up that may be ported to CD-ROM. **Z**



Actua Soccer

Another day, another PC football game. They come, they see, they fail miserably. Will this one be any different? **Patrick McCarthy** hasn't got a clue.

THIS GAME," IT SAYS IN THE publicity handout, "will play like Barcelona did against Manchester United." Frankly, given the state of most other PC football games, I think we'd settle for it playing like Blackburn did against Trelleborgs. It would still comfortably defeat the opposition. Rather like Ajax did against Milan, in fact. And by the way, we'd like to say that we were behind them all

the way. Even though it was cheating Dutch swine who knocked our brave English Tommies out of the World Cup with one of the worst displays of referee-aided injustice in history. (Matched recently only by Italy's psychotic display, and lucky win, against Spain in the tournament itself.) But we supported Ajax because they were playing Milan. And we'd support anyone against Milan — except maybe Manchester United. Apparently Milan

have plans to buy the whole of the rest of Italy next season to make sure they regain the Scudetto.

Eh?

Games have come, trumpeting their technical virtuosity and their revolutionary rotoscoped animation sequences, and games have gone, dragging their tired old gameplay in a stained pillowcase behind them, banished from the Room of Lovely Games, to wait in the Foyer of Over-Hyped Disappointments until they can be released on budget. And *Actua Soccer* is the latest, complete with cocky name, that takes the piss out of all the Virtua titles, and real live England footballers.

What?

Well, sort of. Andy Sinton, it says here, of "Sheffield Wednesday and England", is one of them. And Chris Woods, also of (ahem) "Sheffield Wednesday and England", is the other. It's a moot point whether either of these players still have the right to include the "and England" bit, neither exactly featuring prominently in the current side — it's a bit like Geoff Thomas doing it. In fact, but for Pressman's injury at the end of last season and Trevor Francis' bizarre decision-making, it's likely that Chris Woods wouldn't even be a Wednesday player. And, according to Matt and David Cooper of *War of the Monster Trucks*, the Owls' fanzine, neither are what you'd call popular, or deserved, members of the team. I say all this only because it does make you wonder why these particular players have been

Product details

Developer: Gremlin

Publisher: Gremlin

Telephone: 01142 753423

Format: CD-ROM

Release date: August

chosen. I suppose they do have a lot of time on their hands. And maybe Gremlin is working on a game that involves a lot of falling down injured and conceding last-minute goals.

Come again?

What it will have is 44 national teams (all looking strangely like Andy Sinton and Chris Woods) which you'll be able to customise. Perhaps you'll be able to make them look like Geoff Thomas. It will also have a celebrity commentator. (As we go to press, this is rumoured to be either Rusty Lee or Lester Piggott.) Most importantly, it will have almost unlimited camera angles which you'll be able to adjust yourself. What's more, you can do the same with replays, so you can bore the buttokian glands off your friends by showing your favourite goals over and over again from that painstakingly positioned Centre Forward Nasal Cavity-Cam™. There'll also be a five-players-on-one PC option, and an amazing network facility allowing up to 20 people to play at once. (That way lies Confusion, if you ask me.) I don't know about you lot, but we're getting so excited about all this that our kneecaps have exploded. **Z**

(Below) All 484 international players bear an uncanny resemblance to Andy Sinton and Chris Woods.



(Right) Invite your mates round to admire the almost unlimited camera angles.

(Far Right) Thrill to the long-ball game and a 0-0 draw with a bunch of haggis-munching Jocks.



(Right). Gremlin invested in some very expensive and techy Motion Capture equipment to make sure the players moved realistically.



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The gamesplaying public, left feeling distinctly underwhelmed after the whole *Rise of the Robots* experience, has demanded that justice be done, and formally accuses *Primal Rage* of crimes against gameplay before it's even released. Jeremy Wells, having looked at the evidence, decided to jump in and put the case for the defence...

Primal Rage

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING. YOU'VE glanced at the game's name, given the screen shots the once over, noticed who's publishing it, and have already made up your mind. You have very nearly turned the page and you're thinking "This is going to be just like *Rise of the Robots*," aren't you? You're thinking "Fancy graphics doth not a good game make," and muttering something derogatory about ninja-bast PC specifications and coin-op conversions.

Well stop it! Stop it right now. You're just not being fair. Yes, *Primal Rage* is being published by the same people as *Rise of the Robots*, and yes, it is another beat 'em up ported over from a world-renowned coin-op. And yes again, it is going to be released on just about every format ever conceived and forced onto an unsuspecting gamesplaying public with a promotion campaign that Bill Clinton would be proud of. But (Mr Judge and Jury) before you make up your mind and decide on a suitable punishment that befits the crime(s), hear out the case for the defence.

Primal character references

Well, for starters, the conversion is being handled by those rather splendid chappies at Teeny Weeny Games (of *Discworld* fame) who, being rather clever, reckon that their conversion will mimic the arcade version as closely as possible (given the restraints of the hardware available), and will, therefore, be as immensely playable and

satisfying to watch as the original game.

"That's all very well," you might think, but you may also think "I don't really rate beat 'em ups, especially those on the PC." Well, the only suitable retort to such cliched sentiment is something along the lines of: "that's exactly what everyone who hasn't played a beat 'em up on the PC says. But let's take a look at the facts..."

...Have you actually played *Super Street Fighter 2 Turbo* on the PC? Have you seen what they're doing with *Rise 2*? Did you know that *Primal Rage* is the first video game ever to use stop-motion animation throughout (a process that movie makers have been using for years to great effect i.e. *King Kong*, *The Wrong Trousers* etc.), which enables software developers to take advantage of incredibly life-like prehistoric creatures which move and behave just like the real thing?

A moving experience

Have you even begun to consider the implications of playing a game which features seven oh-so-carefully crafted and highly individual dinosaurs and an enhanced fighting engine, which allows each individual character to execute over 70 different moves, including ready poses, normal moves, special moves, fatalities, combo hits and blocks? Can

Product details

Developer: Teeny Weeny

Publisher: Time Warner Interactive

Telephone: 01604 602800

Format: CD-ROM

Release date: August

you fail to be impressed by the fact that *Primal Rage* will feature more combination potential than any other fighting game to date? Were you unaware that deftly woven into the tapestry of the gameplay were secret "diversions" that can be accessed at certain points in the game, such as ten-pin bowling (with the tribes people posing as the pins), and that each character is wont to indulge in ritualistic victory rites (such as pissing over their dishevelled opponent) on notching up a special victory?

Did it never occur to you that one of the best routes to unrivalled two-player fun is via a beat 'em up, and that *Primal Rage* looks to be all-conquering when it is released on August 25 on no less than 12 (yes, 12!) formats?

Look at the facts. Take a look at the grabs. Remember - dinosaurs are an endangered species and you should always be kind to animals. **Z**

(Above) All of the creatures were modelled and then textured for super realistic movement.

(Below) An artist puts the finishing touches to one of the models.

(Below right) The game boasts more move combinations than any other beat 'em up, and also features some wicked combi moves and fatalities.



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Screamer



"Bloody stupid name for a racing game, isn't it?" asked Paul Presley. "Well, it screams round the track," replied Virgin's PR guy rather weakly. "Harumph," replied Paul Presley (getting his name into the intro twice for the first time ever).

THE OTHER NIGHT I WAS OUT WITH A FEW friends getting very, very drunk. Eventually the bartender of time shook the cocktail mixer of inevitability and poured out the last orders of fate. And as sure as night follows late evening, we were smartly turfed out and told to go home.

Naturally the conversation (such as it was) got around to who'd be driving. Since none of us were in any fit state we took a cab. But if, if, one of us had foolishly sat behind the wheel and edged out into the busy traffic, the experience might very well have been not entirely dissimilar to my first bash with Virgin's new answer to the darling of the super-consoles – *Ridge Racer*.

You crashed, didn't you?

And how! As soon as the lights turned green I was screaming off round the track (the PR guy was right), into the back of a Ferrari F40 and off the side of a wall that spun my car up into the air and back on to the ground. Luckily this was only an unfinished demo, so the car suffered no damage and I was off again. But it was still pretty hairy stuff.

Basically, *Screamer* is fast. Very fast. On a 66MHz at any rate, which is being touted as the minimum recommended speed for this wonder from Spain. If you want to race fast cars, buy a fast machine. If you want to stick with your 486sx 33MHz, then you'll just have to wait for the forthcoming *Fiat Uno Simulator* from Pathetisoft. So you won't be able to drive everything from F40s to Porsche 911s to Lamborghini Diablos over five specially created tracks and one bonus secret track (which I know how to get to but I'm not letting on). And it means you won't be able to drive them linked over a network to 15 other players. It's just a shame you can't have a gun strapped to the bonnet.

(Above) This is probably the closest you'll ever get to driving a Diablo.

(Above left) The trackside detail is absolutely top-per. As for the cars, they actually look like they're supposed to. Even the sky is reflected in the windows, and their wheels move too.

We don't all have networks, you know

Too true. We often forget that as a magazine we are blessed with more PCs than a riot in Bradford and, as such, have access to the elite world of Multi-Player Fun. Still, remember *Ridge Racer* in the arcades? Remember how great it was at first? Remember, then, when *Daytona* appeared in those four-to-six player linked cabinets? Did anyone remember *Ridge Racer* after that? Yeah, right. The future is in null modem cables my friends and *Screamer* is making sure it's wired for sound.

I'm a ninja PC

Then you're very lucky, but you're probably still not ninja enough to run *Screamer* in its full glory, that of hi-res mode. Most of these piccies are from the low-res version (this is the one that needs the 66MHz as minimum). Now, prepare to faint as I tell you that there are two higher modes of visual representation (mid- and hi-res). The hi-res version I was shown was still very unfinished and had a lot of optimising to get through, but even so, despite the jerkiness, it still looked impressive. If Virgin can get it running smoothly, PC race fans are in for a real treat.



(Bottom row) Most of the grabs shown here are in low-res because that's the only mode from which you can select different the view points. High res looks absolutely gob-smacking – let's just hope it's quick enough.



Product details

Developer: Graffiti

Publisher: Virgin Interactive

Telephone: 0181 960 2255

Format: CD-ROM

Release date: September/October

And there's more...

The game is full of spicy little graphical touches as well as meaty big ones. Trucks whizz over bridges as you pass under them, a giant screen scoreboard for the fans has images of the race flashing up as you go past – even the normally faceless crowd looks as if it's made up of real people. The feeling of speed is very good, which is good news as one of the problems I usually have with driving simulation games is that they never really conjure up a true sense of real speed. *Screamer* seems to do so, and then some. (I think you might have mentioned this already. Ed.)

Spain's finest export?

Oh, did I mention earlier on that *Screamer* hailed from Spain? So I did. Yes, it's from Spain. Not France. Spain. Can we hold that against it? You know, all Johnny Foreigners are alike and all that? No, don't be daft. What about all that business with the fish? That was Canada's fight really. Nope, we can't hold the fact that they're from Europe against them. What you might want to hold against them, though, is that this is the same bunch that brought us *Iron Assault* (which scored a paltry 57% in Issue 25). Don't, though. It wouldn't be fair to *Screamer* which, as I may have indicated, looks like being much better.

(Above) Check out the graphics! But if you want more, there's a choice of three different viewpoints.

Well, that's as much as we've seen of the game so far, so there's not a lot left for me to say. *Screamer* has everything you'd expect from an arcade racer: realistic car handling, fast moving but detailed graphics, speed, exhilaration and so on. It's not a simulator like *NASCAR* or *FIGP*, but that shouldn't start you thinking of things like *Crazy Cars* and *Outrun*. A closer comparison would be Bullfrog's *Hi-Octane*, but it's more friendly (you can find out what we made of *Hi-Octane* in our review on page 66).

The game has all the usual features, such as a replay mode that uses lots of differently positioned cameras, plus there's an option to play from one of three different viewpoints. It's fully compatible with just about any

combination of joysticks, pedals and steering wheels. Purchasers of the CD-ROM version will have the added bonus of a thumping fully digital techno soundtrack to listen to as they mirror-signal-manoeuvre.

Which makes pretty nice icing on what looks set to be a very delicious cake. *Screamer* is scheduled for a September launch, by which time it will have to take on the Bullfrog monster, but the real challenge will be whether it will persuade people to put a PC on their shopping list in place of a Saturn or PlayStation. Plus, hopefully by the time of release, a processor chip will have been invented that is capable of displaying the hi-res mode at a decent speed. Then again, probably not. **Z**

(Below) You'll need a powerful PC to get the most out of the gorgeous graphics.

(Below right) Just touch the brakes at 150kph and you'll go into the most amazin' spin.



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Championship Manager 2

Patrick McCarthy dons an outrageously clichéd, predictably dull managerial sheepskin jacket, largely because he can't think of anything else.

WE USED TO RUN A REGULAR little panel on the contents page that said which games had managed, against all odds – (given the number of games we have to look at every month, and the fact that they have to be deleted to make room for others) – to remain installed on the office hard drives over the month. Most of you thought that this was our little way of showing which games had the best staying power and/or the highest addiction quotient. In reality, it was an attempt to fly in the face of the facts and convey the image that we play computer games. In truth, we never actually play games, because we can't stand the things. Instead, we make all our reviews up and hope for the best. We might get the odd court case here and there if we make a bad guess from the title, but by and large we get away with it and nobody's any the wiser. *(Except that you've just spoilt it. Ed.)* Ah. Yes. What shall I do? *(Pretend it was a joke. Ed.)* Er... Ha ha, only joking. *(That's fooled 'em. Ed.)*

But (ahem) er, seriously, folks...

Let's start again. If I asked you to guess which two games have remained on our hard drives longer than any others, allowing for malicious or incompetent deletion and the odd incident of spontaneous combustion, you'd probably guess one of them would be *Doom*. But you'd probably have a more difficult time guessing the other. Alright, you'd probably wander off without even bothering to guess at all, but let's just pretend that you're humouring me. Have you guessed yet, children? No, try again. Nope... No... Nope. *(Oh, for God's sake get on with it. Ed.)* It's *Championship Manager 93* (and its various incarnations). Gasp.



(Above) Domestic and international tournaments, and the promise of being able to play any league in the world (when the data disks are released later next year, that is) – oh joy!

Product details

Developer: Domark (in-house)

Publisher: Domark

Telephone: 0181 780 2222

Format: CD-ROM and floppy

Release date: September

We love it. It makes us genuinely ashamed when we think of the months of our lives we have wasted playing the thing, frittering away precious, never-to-be-repeated moments of the short time we each have on this planet by staring numbly at team formation screens, trying desperately to think of a way to achieve a result at Porto in the European Cup with both centre-backs unavailable, a midfield playmaker sent off and a star striker out with a broken collar bone.

While lesser, ill-informed magazines were pushing *Premier Manager*, with its sneakily misleading title and tedious gameplay, based around saving up for some really nice Formica for your stadium's pie-stall, we stuck by CM93 –

(Below left) Well now, there's a surprise.

(Below right) With stats like that, they should stick to turnip farming.

(Below far right) Kim Grant – top bargain buy from Charlton at £140K.



the purists' choice. It's come top of every football management game feature we've ever done. Because it's the best. It has unrivalled addictiveness, great ease of use and it's considerate in bed, too. (But rough when you want it to be.) We still play it even today. And now, after months and months of rumour, speculation, questions in the House and articles in *Hello!*, the first playable example of the new version has emerged. It's still being worked on as you read this, and it won't now be released until as near to the start of next season as possible, to allow for last minute transfers (Dino Baggio to Spurs, for example. I can dream...) Many of the features haven't been implemented yet, and several more are going to be changed. But this is what we know.

Millions of players

Gone is the old foreign transfer list, chocka with nonentities you don't really want, who have terrible ratings and you can't sign anyway because they're not for sale and even if they are you can't get a work permit. Instead, you get all the major players in every club side in Europe. Bloody millions of them. In fact, if you look carefully, you'll probably see yourself, down there in the Slug and Pineapple's Third Team.

To complement this, there's a name search feature. If you're after a foreign star for your title-challenging side but can't remember which club, say, Davor Suker or Tomás Skuhravy play for, you can still find them quickly – even if you're a couple of seasons into the game and they've been transferred. (Cries of "Hoorah" and "About bloody time.") Transfers themselves are also being made more realistic; you can offer players in exchange, and when you approach a player, he now thinks about it for a couple of days and gets back to





(Top) Bit of a player stat overload you might think, but the originals are still in there somewhere. (Above) A new player search facility allows you to simply key in the name and up he pops ready for inspection.

(Above) Style of play is yet to be implemented, but you can now select any formation style simply by dragging a player to where you want him to play. Arrows and set pieces are still in the pipeline.

you. And yes, I do mean days: the game now has a proper calendar with fixtures occurring as they should in real life.

Tactics and ratings

The tactics screen has been improved, and now allows you to play people more or less wherever you want. You want three support players, a sweeper and two anchor men? Go ahead, weirdo. What isn't certain at the moment is whether the old commands to tell players to play forward and back will return. We hope so. Likewise with the playing styles: there's talk of making this work on an individual basis, which we're also not sure about. *Tactical Manager* tried it, and there were too many variables involved to find out where you were going wrong.

One new consideration is that your players get tired – and, thanks to the increased individual ratings (20 of them), you can see this. If, for example, someone from your squad gets an

international call-up, they're likely to return knackered. This means that they'll have less stamina at the start of the game (if selected), and their performance will suffer. And talking of international matches, if you perform well enough as a manager you'll be offered the job of coaching the national side as well, and having your head made to look like a root vegetable. Easier for some people than others.

And if you think 20 ratings is a lot to be getting on with, you should see the post match stuff: every game – I said every game – can display the number of passes made, shots attempted and tackles and headers won, and that's for every single player. We're talking anal retentive heaven here.

Too hard?

The stamina question is one of the many new features designed to make the game harder and more challenging. Apparently, people were complaining

that they'd won the Quadruple 25 years in succession, and stuff like that. To my mind, these sort of claims have the whiff of "re-booting after a loss" about them. And it's up to you if you cheat to win, but it does mean that you can't really complain that a game's too easy afterwards. Anyway, this is going to be harder. How much harder? How about Spurs 5-0 down at home to Chelsea at half time, during a "tactical experiment"? (Gullit scored 4.)

The other big new feature will be the data disks featuring Italian, Scottish, Spanish and German leagues. (You won't be able to play them all at once, though; because of the large number of players and teams involved, each game needs 8Mb of RAM to run. We would recommend that those of you still with 4Mb should get an upgrade sooner rather than later.) And lastly, a friendly word of advice – stop panting, unless you want your tongue to look like a pumice stone by September. **Z**

(Right) Clive Tyldesly is currently adding his dulcet tones to the project as you read this, but we won't hold that against Domark.

(Far right) The man behind it all, programmer Ollie Collyer stifles a laugh when we suggest he brings on LeTissier and changes to a Christmas tree formation.



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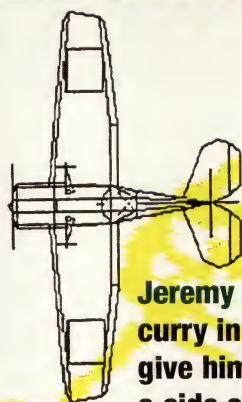
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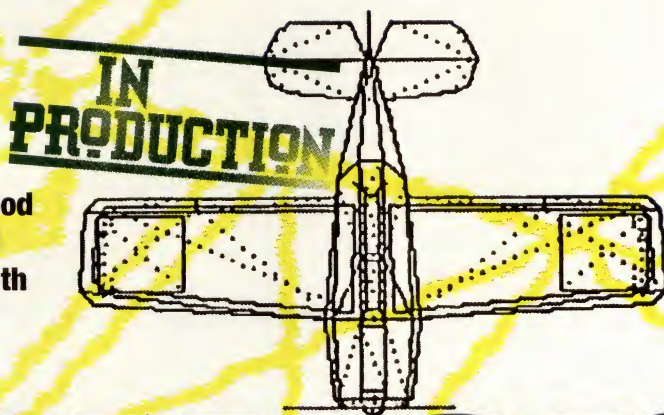


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(Background and right) Although the aircraft are fictitious, they are actually based on real flight models and are similar to what might have been developed had economic and political conditions been more conducive to aeronautical exuberance.



Jeremy Wells hasn't been for a good curry in ages, so we thought we'd give him *Airpower* from Rowan with a side order of poppadoms to get his bowels moving again.



Airpower

QUH NO, NOT ANOTHER FLIGHT SIM! I hear you moan, and from the Rowan bods, too! They certainly seem to get about a bit on the old flight sim front, don't they? What with *Overlord* and *Dawn Patrol* under their belts, and the forthcoming *Navy Strike* (which they're developing for MicroProse); the hush-hush sequel to *Dawn Patrol* (which they're currently putting together for Empire); and now the rather splendid, but distinctly odd looking *Airpower*, they've certainly been keeping themselves busy, and building themselves a bit of a rep as flight sim aficionados in the process.

So is it a case of "we've built a decent flight engine and we're gonna flog it to as many publishers as we can", or is Rowan being thoroughly British about it all, doing the decent thing and making them all very, very different?

Dawn Air Patrol Power

Well, even though *Airpower* is very *Dawn Patrol*-esque, it most definitely represents a step forward in terms of dynamics and gameplay. Yes, it may use an "enhanced" *Dawn Patrol* flight engine (similar to that used in the forthcoming networkable version of *Dawn Patrol*) and it may also look distinctly "samey" as far as the style of the graphics goes, but that's really where any similarity ends.

Not only is the plot a million miles away from any other air combat sim you're likely to come across (see boxout) and the planes like nothing else you've ever seen before (because Rowan has made them all up), but the structure of the game has been totally re-jigged and cunningly includes a healthy dollop of strategy. So it's less of an "interactive book" (as *Dawn Patrol* was) and more of a



"thinking man's" shoot 'em up which isn't a million miles away from, let's say, *Magic Carpet*.

That's not to say it doesn't look like a Rowan product. The easy-to-use menu system is still there, the control is as instinctive and intuitive as it was in *Dawn Patrol*, and there's an SVGA mode if you happen to be the proud owner of a spanking new Pentium (which, the producer promises, will be compatible with every graphics card currently around or imminent) and want to impress your friends. If you're not one of the lucky few, though, Rowan has also built in the option to manually crank down the detail (clouds, buildings, landscape etc.) to speed things up, while you can also select an option so that things switch off automatically whenever you indulge in some heavy-duty combat (the screen shrinks as well). This means that the processor has less of a hard time throwing a dozen different planes around the

screen, resulting in a better refresh rate, and leaving you to concentrate on the job in hand flicker-free.

As soon as things settle down (i.e. you have been shot down and are spiralling to the ground in an impressive ball of flames, or you've managed to avert the threat of enemy craft from the immediate proximity), it all switches back to the original detail setting for super fluid animation throughout. So now you can have your cake and eat it (even if you do own a 386DX).

So what else is new?

Well, for starters there are ten new and highly original aircraft (five bombers and five fighters), which despite never actually being built and sporting some rather intriguing colour schemes, are based on what might have been developed - taking into account the period and level of technology - had the backroom boys discovered the delights



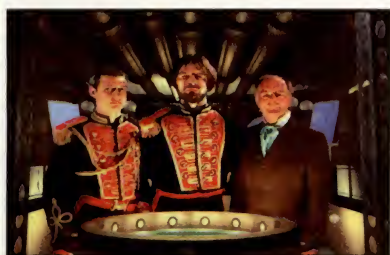
of marijuana and LSD. That's not to say they aren't realistic, though. Each of the aircraft flies and handles just as it would do if it had actually made it into production, and while certain planes are more suitable for certain missions than others (the fighters being more manoeuvrable and equipped with guns and rockets, whereas the bombers are less agile, but have more clout in combat), they all look and fly brilliantly.

Each faction houses two different types of aircraft (and as there are four factions, players will get to fly up to eight different planes, depending on whom they choose to represent). Although each aircraft looks quite different from another, all of them sport highly colourful regional markings and insignia, so you can tell at a glance just who's a friend or foe.

What no "heir" ports?

There are also three different types of airships (aircraft carriers, bombers and escort carriers) from which the player must control his or her operations, and as each one also acts as a mobile airport (there are no runways, just hooks that you have to snag your plane on to in order to "land"), it's essential that you protect them at all costs.

Missions will vary from simple escort



Product details

Developer: Rowan Software

Publisher: Mindscape

Telephone: 01444 246333

Format: CD-ROM and floppy

Release date: September

missions to bombing runs and head-to-head challenges. While the overall aim of the game is to subdue the surrounding environs (through negotiation or force), gain as much support as possible, and then attempt to secure the throne, there will also be the option to fly 12 one-off missions instead of embarking on a lengthy campaign.

When you add constant radio chatter (which is pulled off the CD so as not to interfere with the rest of the sound effects), improved ACM and AI, a 12 minute animated intro sequence, the possibility of contoured ground and even four-way network play (currently on the producer's wish list), you can rest safe in the knowledge that *Airpower* will look and play like no other air combat sim on the market when it's released in September. In the meantime, full marks to Rowan for originality. **Z**



(Above) The game is crying out for a four-way network option, but we may have to wait until *Airpower 2* for such luxury. Contoured ground might still make it into the final version.

(Below) No airfields means no runways and no take-offs and no landings. Instead, you launch yourself from an airship and fall into the sky, while landing requires you to snag a special hook (a bit like on aircraft carriers). It's more difficult than you might think.

(Far left) These rather dodgy looking blokes are supposedly there to help you.

! Weirdy plot or what?

Airpower is set in a parallel world, sometime between the two world wars...

...A chunk of land the size of Russia has been ruled by the Aryan Dynasty for hundreds of years. The Emperor has copped it, his son also then dies in suspicious circumstances, and the dead Emperor's four daughters (and their husbands) are now involved in a bitter dispute over the throne.

The player can choose to play any of the four claimants (each have different personalities and favour different methods of winning support, such as diplomacy, aggression etc.) and compete against the other three factions for land, power and, ultimately, the capital city.

Each faction has a select group of advisors (diplomats, generals and the like), all presented in FMV (thanks to new ChromaKey technology) who offer useful pointers about what action to take (diplomacy, siege, suppression and kill warlord). Taking the diplomatic route involves answering multiple choice questions, which enable you to sound out what kind of action (pact or aggression) would be most appropriate, while there's always the option to charge in, guns blazing if talks break down. You can charge in guns blazing anyway, but like they say on TV, "it's good to talk."

In all, there are over 100 different settlements for you to "conquer" (each one has its own agenda), and if you attempt to take over the capital before you are strong enough, then you'll get well and truly plastered.



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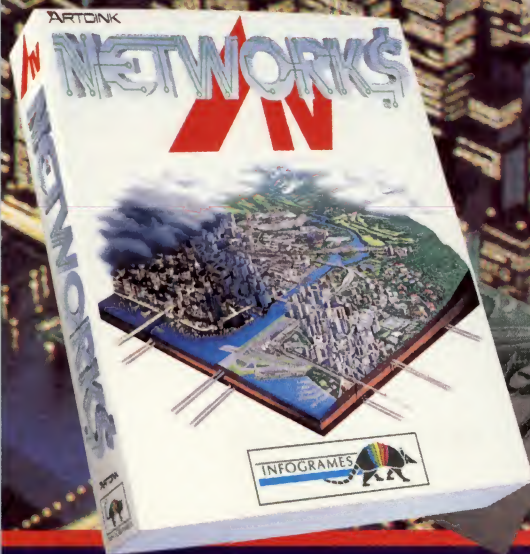
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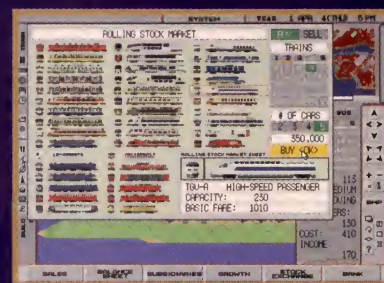
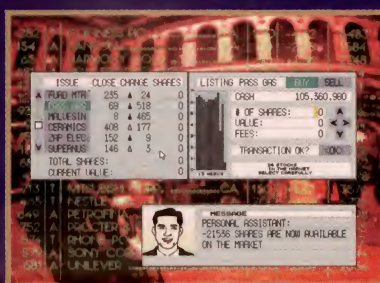
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MotorCross

Part-time mods Paul Rigby and Derek Dela Fuente got on their scooters and pootled over to Graftgold's headquarters, determined not to be scared by the smelly biker sim currently in development.

FIRMLY ESTABLISHED AS ONE OF THE UK's top development teams, Graftgold is currently working on a new bike sim, *MotorCross*.

"This title's unique because it's been built with a proper 3D engine so that it generates terrain, gives magnificent views and a proper feel to a game," said Graftgold's Steve Turner enthusing about the company's "Doom on a Bike" game during our recent visit.

Whereas bike sims in the past have tended to be flat racing affairs, similar to road racing games, in *MotorCross* the experience is much more like the real thing. If you skid over the road too far, for example, you risk flying off a ledge and falling over the side of a cliff.

"We have tried to get the motorbikes to feel and look as realistic as possible. You can skid them around corners and you can get the bike to do a wheelie if you move into a low gear," added front-man veteran, Andrew Braybrook.

Recreating the real thing is very important to the programmers at Graftgold. They've spent a lot of time working on the engine and believe that it's not only unique, but one of the most innovative 3D engines to appear in a long while. Realism is all part of presenting the player with a true environment. Say, for instance, you are



flying through the air and you touch the brake, you'll find that it dips the front wheel so

you can get the shock absorbers to take the impact and avoid crashing when you land. Placing the bikes on some of the different types of terrain, which range from snow to hills and rock, is remarkably difficult. However, Graftgold has cheated a little so that people will be able to handle the bikes.

"We've looked at various true-life tracks and had the use of motor bikes so that the physics within the game is correct, with the exception that the bikes do not crash as much as they would in real life. We wanted to almost exaggerate the fun bits of racing. If you watch the real thing you will notice that the bikes can surge up to 50 feet into the air which is tremendous. The distance they travel is spectacular as well considering they are travelling at low speed," commented Steve.

On yer bike

A range of bikes has been incorporated, so you start off with a relatively slow bike which is easy to control and you graduate, through experience, up to more powerful ones. You can buy better gear boxes, customise your bike as you

Product details

Developer: Graftgold

Publisher: Time Warner

Telephone: 01604 602800

Format: Floppy and CD

Release date: End of the Year

win money and progress. Your ultimate goal is to get your hands on the high-end machines – and these are really tough to drive.

As for the game's perspective, this is a look into the screen game, like *Ridge Racer* or *Doom*, but there will be an option to access a variety of viewpoints.

"We wanted to focus on one view and not clutter things up with panning and cut shots. What you see is what you get. The main view is from behind so you can see what angle your bike is at and the obstacles ahead," Andrew added.

Graftgold has gone for an international feel to add more variety. Each of the scenarios will be set in a different continent and each continent offers various landscape types. There are tracks ranging from the Arctic to the desert, and from Arizona to the temperate climates. Each will present a special challenge. For instance, on snow it will take skill to prevent skidding and keep your bike running. The terrain will also vary from bumpy to flat. Add the curves of the tracks and you start to get a wealth of differing parameters which make the game exceedingly playable.

MotorCross is certainly shaping up as a bike sim worth donning your leathers for, so watch out for the full review in next month's issue. **Z**



(Above) The coveted "Oscar" of the *MotorCross* world.

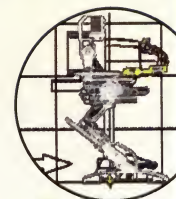
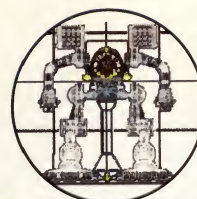
(Right) From drawing board to the smart final "matching shellsuits" product.



IN
PRODUCTION

There aren't many people who would want to strap themselves into a 30 foot robot, armed to the teeth with lasers and rockets... what are we saying? Everyone would. **Paul Presley** is holding ticket number 3346c.

(Right) Players are allowed to customise their own Mechs by adding personalised weapon combinations.



MechWarrior 2



(Left and far left) The cockpit has been manufactured by the same people that designed the Starship Enterprise. As soon as anything hits you, the whole thing shakes violently from side to side.



A 1.5 DOLLAR MILLION MARKETING campaign. Activision is spending a mere 1.5 million dollars on advertising and promotion for *MechWarrior 2* and will I see a penny of it in potential review bribe money? Hah! Will I buggery. But why not? Surely they can count me as legitimate promotional expenditure? I'm perfectly willing to swallow my moral compunctions for a share of the pie. I can be bought.

The game, pinhead

Sigh. So where is the money going and why is it warranted, you ask? It seems Activision is going all out on this one - television campaigns, magazine and newspaper advertising, competitions, on-line conferences with the game's creators. It's confident that *MechWarrior 2* is going to be the biggest thing ever, but you have to wonder. I mean, when has the thought of two large robots

(Right) Damage is handled realistically within the game. Bits fly off, systems go down and your wingman runs away as soon as you look like you're in trouble...

beating each other up worked in the past? It didn't work for *Terminator 2*, did it? (Yes. Ed.) Okay, bad example, but what about *Rise of the Robots*? Still, the *BattleTech* phenomenon seems to have gripped the United States by the short and curlies, so I guess we're along for the ride on this one. Let's face it, it's not as if Activision is expecting to make a profit based on UK sales alone, is it?

Anyway, the game. It certainly looks impressive, I'll give it that. Activision has teamed up with a Hollywood special effects company called Digital Domain to produce the (very) impressive sci



(Left & below left) Combat takes place over many desolate landscapes: deserts, icy tundra, Dorking...

(Below) Ye Gods! Who's going to take on a 30 foot killer robot?



IN PRODUCTION

Product details

Developer: In-house

Publisher: Activision

Telephone: 0181 742 9400

Format: CD-ROM

Release date: Early August



animations and has blended them with a brand new 3D polygon engine to create the game's look. This look is bolstered by plenty of smaller touches such as a "virtual cockpit" that rocks, rolls and shudders depending on what's hitting it, real-world dynamics such as weather and gravity affecting the performance of your Mech, and three-dimensional surround sound effects produced by the Oscar-winning Soundelux Media Labs.

And this is all used to do...?

The concept behind the game is simple and should be familiar to anyone that's played any other Mech-based title. Life in the 31st century is dominated by several ruling clans, who settle their various power struggles by battling it out inside huge warrior robots on alien planets. Your task is to join one of these clans and work your way up through the ranks, at the same time battling for honour and survival. Eventually you'll

(Top) The cut-scenes and menu screens are all presented in SVGA and look extremely nice indeed.

(Below) The clans all hang out in some bizarre hall things and the cut-scenes show these beautifully.

(Far below) Another one of the cool looking "between the levels" screens. Neat, huh?



But if you eschew the olde worlde methods of paper and ink...

If you have the very latest in digital communication malarkey, you might be interested in Activision's homepage (that's on the Web for Internet newbies). Point your browser to <http://www.activision.com> and you'll be greeted with a page of fire and more information, screenshots and animations than you can shake a virtual glove at. You can also access *BattleTech*-related information including news of the Virtual World Entertainment Centers, huge Mech-based Virtual Reality game palaces

that allow teams of warriors to play each other in large flight simulator-style units.



take command of the clan and battle it out with opposing clan leaders to gain total dominance. *MechWarrior 2* is basically a first person perspective shoot 'em up with killer robots.

There is talk, though, of an eight to sixteen player network add-on being delivered further down the line. Providing the gameplay lives up to the impressive graphics, it could mean a whole new pastime to envelop our gamers' lunchtimes. Well come on, being strapped into the seat of a 30 foot killer robot with your friends certainly sounds a far better proposition than cowering and quaking behind an explosive barrel with an empty pistol as you hear Macca getting closer with his chainsaw.

I'm NOT playing Macca

Whichever way you approach it, *MechWarrior 2* looks and sounds impressive enough to bolster new interest in the whole *BattleTech* genre. Activision is certainly going for the full immersion experience, making the game compatible with virtually any combination of control devices, from sticks and mice to foot pedals and VR helmets.

Along with the rumours of a new *BattleTech* virtual game centre opening in London before long (see Internet panel), we could be looking at the start of a whole new entertainment craze. "Strike while the iron's still warming up" would appear to be Activision's motto. **Z**

BattleTech – An Editorial

(N.B. These opinions are strictly those of Paul Presley and are not held by the rest of *PC Zone*.)

What I want to know is this: at what point did the concept of hulking, great futuristic robots, battling it out over first person perspective environments, become popular over here? I mean, for years *BattleTech* existed as an anorak-friendly tabletop wargame, then for some reason we had a dozen or so software houses working on simulations and variations of the damn thing, and now you can't move for games with "Mech" in the title. From what the various press releases that flutter down from said companies say, you'd think that robotic combat was the biggest thing in youth entertainment since *Crackerjack*. Did anyone actually ask us, though? Did anyone turn

round at some point and say, "Do the kids actually want all this, or are we fooling ourselves?" No, of course not. The hype machine got rolling, everyone jumped on board and now they can't leave for fear of being seen to be weak by everyone else.

Of course America is to blame – over there a minority interest is still probably bigger than most of our major genres and it's inevitable that software that sells Stateside will find its

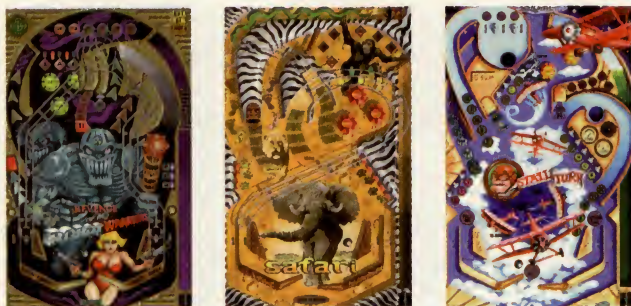
way over here, but do we want it? Like the interminable supply of baseball simulators and new versions of *Streetfighter*, we don't want them. I'd write to my MP and complain if I thought it would do any good, but we'd probably all be better off writing to the software houses. Who's with me? (No one. We all like *Streetfighter II*. Ed.) Anyway, here's a photo of the *BattleTech* programmers (below).



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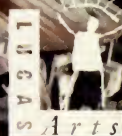


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STAR WARS REBEL ASSAULT II

Rebel Assault is one of the most successful computer games of all time. With worldwide sales now well in excess of a million copies it is one of LucasArts' crowning achievements. **John Davison** takes a look at what is undoubtedly the most eagerly anticipated sequel ever.



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“WARNING!”

Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the *PC Zone* team denies that it is completely obsessed with *Star Wars*. The fact that this is the third *Star Wars* cover the magazine has produced is purely coincidental.

This feature does, however, include a number of facts and snippets of information that many non-*Star Wars* obsessed individuals will find, er... sad. It must be considered though that *Star Wars* is COOL, and anyone who says otherwise will be thrown into a Rancor lair.

May the Force be with you.



(Above) Here we have Mark Hamill, who's not actually in this game... (must be one of the few he isn't in these days.)

(Right and far right) All of the video footage for the game was filmed in front of a blue screen and then rendered images were positioned in the background.



Useless Facts

The writing that appears on the control panel on Darth Vader's chest is supposed to be the unusual language employed by the Sith. Upon closer inspection it is in fact Hebrew.

THOSE FAMILIAR WITH THE ORIGINAL *Rebel Assault* will already know that it involved a story which, above all else, was a bit clever.

Although it tracked the plot of the first *Star Wars* film (or is it the fourth? Ah... we're a bit clever here, you see) it didn't involve any of the well known "goody" characters. You simply played the role of a distinctly wet-behind-the-ears rookie who eventually works his way up to being a respected pilot. After much shooting, blasting and exclaiming "wow!" at the jolly nice graphics,

you eventually got to have a bash at giving the Death Star a kicking.

Rebel II is a bit different. This time, the team has come up with a totally original story which simply fits in with the *Star Wars* time-line (something which is very strictly monitored with regard to all *Star Wars* related stuff, from the infinite number of novels that are appearing to table-top role-playing and computer games). As before, you play Rookie One, which is a bit odd when you think about it, because the amount of stuff he's done is fairly

Filming A New Star Wars Movie

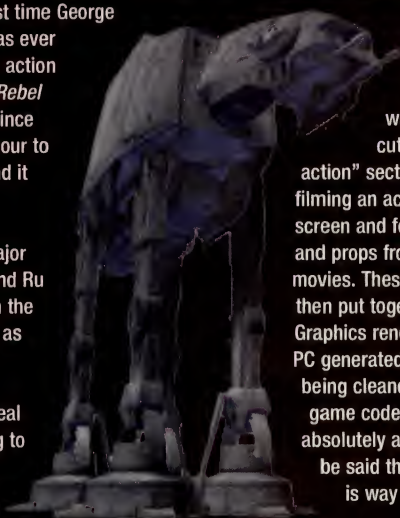
Like *Rebel Assault*, *Rebel II* is an action arcade game set in a familiar universe. However, unlike the first game the story now features live action video throughout. "This is the first time George Lucas has ever

let anyone else film a live action *Star Wars* fantasy," says *Rebel Assault II* project leader Vince Lee. "So it's really an honour to be making the game – and it really better be good!"

As before, the game centres on a couple of major characters, Rookie One and Ru Murlee. However, while in the first game they appeared as decidedly badly drawn characters, in *Rebel II* everyone is played by a real actor. At the time of going to press no one famous had been confirmed for a

role in the game but, if anything, this is something of a blessing. The *Star Wars* universe doesn't need the pulling power of a known star – it's the storyline and background that makes people want to get involved.

As you can see from the pictures we have here, much of the action has been filmed in a similar way to a real film. All the cut-scenes and "live action" sections were produced by filming an actor in front of a blue screen and feature original costumes and props from the three *Star Wars* movies. These video sections are then put together with Silicon Graphics rendered backgrounds and PC generated special effects before being cleaned up and ported into the game code. The resulting effect is absolutely astounding and it has to be said that the production quality is way ahead of any other live



Useless Facts

The original matt painting for the Death Star trench includes miniature versions of numerous famous buildings, one of which is San Francisco's Trans-America building.

impressive – it also seems unfair if you consider that Luke Skywalker was made a Commander after doing only one mission. Okay, admittedly he did blow up the Death Star... but then so did Rookie One. Whoah! Spooky. Anyway, you're still a pathetic Rookie, and I'm sure there are no grudges whatsoever against certain young Jedi farm boys.

Bermuda triangle

The new story opens in the vicinity of the Dreighton Nebula, where Rookie One is part of a scouting patrol that is

Product details

Developer: LucasArts

Publisher: LucasArts/VIE

Telephone: 0181 960 2255

Format: CD-ROM

Release date: Winter 1995

investigating a number of strange disappearances. It seems that the Dreighton Nebula is considered to be something of a "Bermuda Triangle"



action game we've seen on the PC.

As well as the backgrounds for the live action footage, the in-game graphics have also been generated using Silicon Graphics workstations and, from what we've seen so far, the quality is unbelievable. Whereas many SGI rendered products look obviously

rendered, the ships in *Rebel II* look like they might have been filmed, high quality models. The sheer volume of graphics work for the game means that a great number of artists have been employed on the project. As a result, much of the work has been done outside of the LucasArts offices, with the bulk

Useless Facts

George Lucas originally intended the film to be something akin to *Flash Gordon*, and if you think about the storyline in *Star Wars* you can actually see the links. A hero plucked from his home world and forced to do battle with an evil force which he ultimately defeats...

of the space ship rendering produced by a group of artists at Mechadeus in San Francisco (the relatively small software house which recently produced *The Daedalus Encounter*, starring Tia Carrere, for Virgin Interactive Entertainment).

On a more technical note, it's worth mentioning at this point that the video footage throughout *Rebel II* is actually full-screen VGA and of an absolutely excellent quality. The compression technique that LucasArts is working on is straight-up ninja standard and capable of giving some great results. Obviously it's not up to MPEG quality video, but it is more than adequate for a game.



(Left and far left) The quality of the FMV footage is absolutely fantastic and provides full screen VGA quality video at an exceptional frame rate. The combination of live video footage and pre-rendered images makes this possible.



Useless Facts

Inspiration for the Millennium Falcon actually came from a MacDonalds hamburger with a bite taken out of it. (It's true, honest! Would we lie to you?)



(Above) The quality of the graphics is far higher than in the original game. Renderings have been done by both Lucas artists and chaps from Mechadeus.

(Right) Chewie looking distinctly cool.

(Below right) A picture of Princess Leia not wearing very much. So it's not a relevant picture, but we're printing it anyway... because we can.



type affair and the Alliance is having a spot of bother, because it keeps losing ships. To get a pretty dramatic illustration of what is going on in the Nebula, check out the *Rebel Assault II* teaser demo on this month's cover CD.

Legends of the Nebula go back to the early days when early hyperspace travellers lost their bearings and disappeared in the currents, eddies and storms of the Nebula. During the Clone Wars, two opposing combat fleets were completely swallowed up by the thing and no one knows where they went, or

how they ended up wherever they are. These days the area is the subject of much amusement to many experienced pilots, but it has to be said that a high proportion of the galaxy's travellers do cack themselves a bit whenever they have to pass through it.

As *Rebel II* unfolds, Rookie One finds himself responding to a distress call coming from a ship in the Nebula, and once he gets there he discovers that the Imperials have quite clearly been hanging around for some time. This is somewhat odd, because Dreighton is

The new movies...

As you probably know, LucasFilm is currently preparing for the next trilogy of *Star Wars* movies. These are set to appear from 1997, the twentieth anniversary of *Star Wars*. The real *Star Wars* buffs out there will no doubt know a fair bit about this anyway, but as we've learned quite a bit from researching this feature, we thought we'd bang it in anyway.

Right then... The first three movies (*Star Wars: A New Hope* was part four) will appear first and these go all the way back to the Clone Wars and will track a number of things. First, the rise of the Emperor and the Empire and the resulting demise of the Old Republic, the history of Obi-Wan Kenobi, how Anakin Skywalker became Darth Vader and some indication of what the Sith actually are. Finally we will learn how the Emperor and Darth Vader managed to instigate the almost complete eradication of the Jedi.

The means and circumstances by which Anakin becomes Darth Vader is of particular interest and we have been led to believe that a considerable amount of the second movie will concern this. It seems that there is a huge

punch up between Ben and Anakin inside a volcano (or something like that) and the battle ends with Ben pushing Anakin into the lava below. Thinking his old friend is dead, Ben buggers off and feels very upset, but Anakin is rescued by the Sith and then is rebuilt as the Dark Lord.

As far as technology is concerned, we know for a fact that there are no spaceship models in the new movies. All the spacecraft have been constructed on computer by ILM's ace artists. If the modelling done for *Rebel II* is anything to go by, the new films should be absolutely incredible.

Before the eagerly awaited new movie is released, we'll also be treated to a re-mastered version of *Star Wars* in 1997. This film will incorporate an extra seven minutes of brand new footage (gasp) with SGI rendered images mixed in with the digitally re-mastered original footage. George Lucas is obviously rather chuffed, for he is on record as saying that he can now make many of the scenes in the film exactly how he originally perceived them.



Useless Facts

Strange but true, it was originally intended that the entire cast of *Star Wars* would be Oriental.

widely considered as having about as much strategic value as a Pot Noodle. However, upon further investigation our hero soon discovers that the Empire has been up to no good and it is suspected that the champions of all things horrid and nasty are now working on some kind of weird new weapon.

A new challenge

If *Rebel Assault* had any downfalls, it was that the gameplay was somewhat simplistic. The spooled pre-rendered graphics effectively meant that much

of the game was nothing more than an incredibly flash version of something like *Operation Wolf*. All you really had to do was move your cursor around the screen and shoot at spaceships and bad guys, which always appeared in the same places.

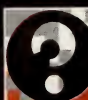
Bearing this in mind, the LucasArts techie bods have spent a great deal of time trying to make the gameplay engine give the impression of freedom. Obviously all the images have been pre-rendered again, but there are now random elements involved (much like

Argonaut's *Creature Shock*) to make the action more challenging. This is done by providing a number of possible outcomes from each situation which are chosen at random before being spooled in seamlessly from the CD. The theory is actually very simple indeed and it really does make the game seem far less "on rails" (to use that awful expression) and ultimately more realistic.

There will be 15 completely different levels in total when the game is completed, and these will be presented in three different game "styles": hand-to-

(Left and below) *Star Wars* merchandise is still some of the most popular. Although they've since been surpassed by the likes of *Batman* and *Jurassic Park*, *Star Wars* goodies are still up there in the multi-multi million dollar stakes.





Useless Facts

In 1978 Neil Young appeared on stage with what was quite obviously a large number of Jawas. Although no legal action was taken by LucasFilm, an out of court settlement was made and the Jawas didn't appear again. It is still unclear as to why they were there in the first place.

hand combat where you battle against Stormtroopers within an Imperial base; flight manoeuvring much like the training missions in *Rebel Assault*; and cockpit combat, which is an enhanced version of the combat from the original game.

To make things just that little bit more exciting for *Star Wars* buffs, the development team has made an effort to provide a lot more variety in the ships players get to fly. Aside from the usual X-Wing, Y-Wing and B-Wing fighters you now also get to have a bash

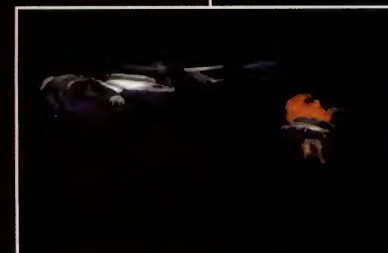
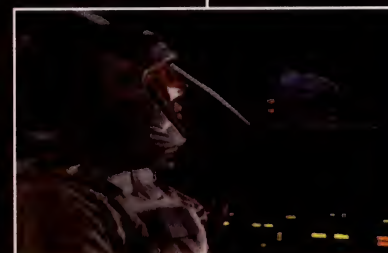
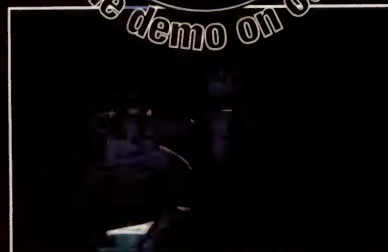
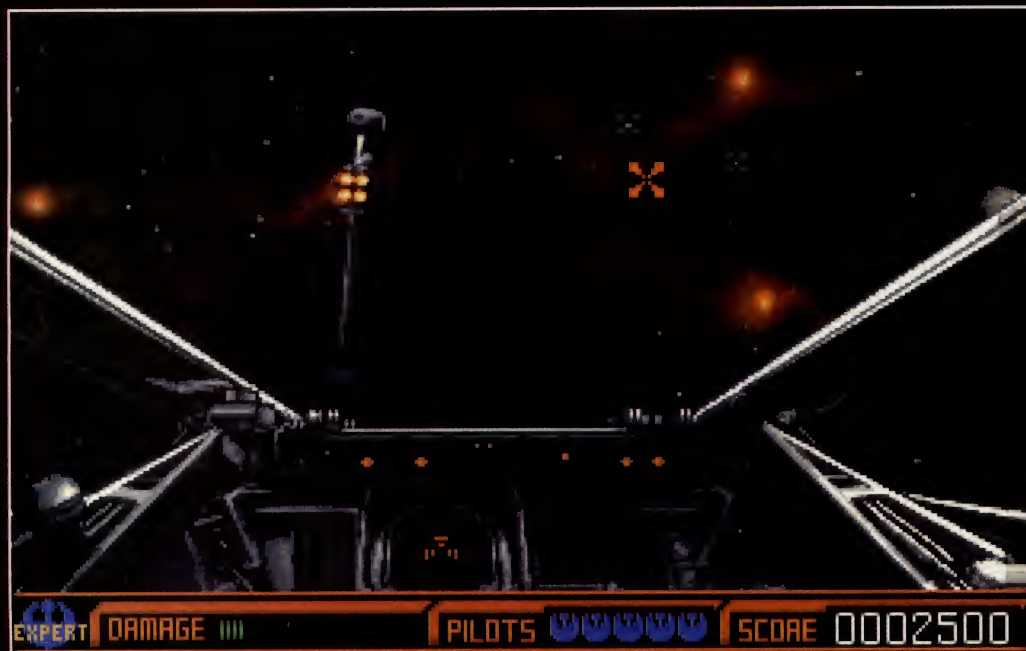
on the awesome Speeder Bike (just like the ones the Imperial Scout Troopers rode in *Return of the Jedi*) and the Millennium Falcon.

As yet it is unclear how the combat sections for the Falcon will be presented – do you fly from the cockpit or are you manning a gun turret? However, we are assured that the Speeder Bike “manoeuvring bit” will be nothing short of absolutely gut-wrenching. **Z**

(Far left column) The demo on this month's cover CD will give you a good idea of how impressive the visuals in the game really are.

(Left) The cut-scenes are really quite staggering and have a far more cinematic feel than any other game we've seen.

(Below) Although the cockpits are the same as in *Rebel Assault*, the “outside” graphics have been enhanced enormously.



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Looking Back

In an attempt to prove both how conscientious we are and that we do actually play the games for more than just the period of the review, we are now starting a regular feature where we look back at some of the games we've reviewed in the past few months.

MAGIC CARPET

Bullfrog: Reviewed Issue 21

Almost universally loved when it was released, *Magic Carpet* is one of those games that really grabs you by the (insert dangly, grabbable part of anatomy here) and hangs on... for a couple of weeks. If you play the thing continually the learning curve works extremely well for the first 30 levels or so – but after that it gets quite ludicrously difficult. Many a *Carpet*-fiend has given up in disgust at the fact that he just can't get any further.

FULL THROTTLE

LucasArts: Reviewed Issue 27

Boasting brilliant graphics, a fantastic story and the best voice for any game character *ever* (Ben sounds like he gargles with grit and broken glass every morning), *Full Throttle* is possibly one of the most superbly presented games around. Unfortunately though, after you've played it for a long time you learn that there simply isn't enough of it. It's a fantastic game, and it plays like a dream, but experienced adventure gamers will find that it's over too quickly.

BIOFORGE

Origin: Reviewed Issue 25

One of the few games where we feel that our original review score was possibly not high enough. Believe us... this sort of thing doesn't happen very often, especially when the thing got 95 per cent to start with! In short, *BioForge* is pant-wettingly good. As you progress deeper into the game the story becomes so involving and compelling that you feel you absolutely *have* to finish it, just to see what happens.

DARK FORCES

LucasArts: Reviewed Issue 24

Star Wars meets *Doom*... a match made in heaven? Well, sort of. It's absolutely brilliant for a while, but like *Full Throttle*, there isn't actually enough of it. Until a few more extra levels start appearing this is (unfortunately) another game with a very limited life.



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The Zone Bods



Cool Games

We see hundreds of games over the months but there are a few that we hang on to and continue to play at lunchtime/when we're supposed to be doing more important stuff...

FX Fighters

Championship Manager 2

Micro Machines 2

Doom (Still... obviously)

Descent

Crap Games

There are some games that you can leave in the middle of the room with a big sign next to them saying "please steal me" and you still can't get rid of the bloody things...

Daedalus Encounter

LoadStar

JetStrike

Chaos Control

Silverload

Reviews Section



THE ZONE SCORING SYSTEM

90+ CLASSIC

Drop-dead brilliant, fab, skill, top, cool, excellent, almost as good as sex... etc., etc. Virtually flawless in all departments and oozing, yes oozing playability.

80-89 RECOMMENDED

Rather jolly super but just not quite up to it in the sexual conquest stakes. More like a good snog really. One of those experiences that's more than adequate all round.

70-79

A good idea that's been reasonably well implemented but not awfully original. A bit like someone coming up to you and saying "do you come here often?". The sort of game you'd go for if you were pissed... or a bit desperate.

60-69

Just above average but absolutely nothing to write home and tell mum about. Adequate presentation, mediocre

gameplay and failing to make the grade in the originality stakes.

50-59

Averagely average Mr McAverage. Any game getting a score around this mark has absolutely nothing special about it whatsoever and will probably be forgotten almost immediately.

40-49

A just about bearable game that notches up a number of crippling flaws. The presentation ain't hot and the gameplay's worse.

20-39

Naff, and definitely worth avoiding at all costs.

20 and below PANTS

Absolute, complete and utter crap. It doesn't get much worse than this and therefore deserves the ultimate accolade... the PC Zone big, blue pants award for extreme naffness.

(Right) Sheba gets her claws into muscle maiden Kiko in the top FX Fighters on page 74



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Ultimate Doom. Thy Flesh Consumed. Doom Special Edition.
It has many names but, as **David McCandless** discovers,
just one purpose... mooch gathering.

PC
ZONE
CLASSIC

Ultimate Doom Thy Flesh Consumed

PANTS

WAIT A MINUTE, I COULD HAVE sworn that this game was shareware once. Remind me: wasn't this the game which redefined the definition of "shareware" as we knew it? Didn't this "title" smack the complacent commercial games industry in the "marf" and make it cry? Didn't this *product* send various games companies scrabbling for their wallets in a desperate attempt to snag the development house responsible? Didn't that very same development house say "no", quite vehemently, only to go on to reap the financial rewards of this ground-breaking *product*?

Was it...? Yes, it was. It was *Doom*. I remember quite clearly now. Ah yes, and ID – the backroom programmers who made it big with the double

whammy of *Wolfenstein* and *Doom*. And who will probably make it bigger with *Quake*. Once a bunch of rollerskating surfers with day-glo girlfriends, the programmers of *Doom* now drive Ferrari Testarosas and worry no longer about the lack of mooch in their pockets.

So, *Doom*, flagship of the shareware renaissance, bastion of all that is great and gory in gamesplaying, the game which stole the hearts and spare time of millions of PC players, which took badly-dressed Romero and co. and gave them Italian designer "automobiles", has become just like any other commercial game – another product, to be milked, repackaged, resold, and rebundled for optimum mooch gathering.

Cynical? Perhaps. But you can't help thinking that repackaging *Doom* in this

way is just a cynical way of leeching a few more pounds from a game which has already made zillions. Non?

Thy cash consumed

Ultimate Doom is basically the original, full version of *Doom* (v1.9) repackaged with an extra ID-designed nine level episode, *Thy Flesh Consumed*. The CD version also contains the *Doom* CD (no frills, just runnable from the CD), and the shareware version of *Heretic*. There are no new monsters, no new graphics (bar a groovy, yellow sky texture), no new weapons – in fact, no new features of any kind really, just nine new maps, ranging from the okay to the excellent.

The whole episode took me about three hours to complete. That was with saving and crusading through each

(Right) Red sky at night... lots of monsters we've all seen before.



Ultimate Doom: Thy Levels Exposed



LEVEL 1 HELL BENEATH

Level one is obviously intended for deathmatch and is acoustically designed to amplify the death cries of multiple players. Small, enclosed, claustrophobic and deadly – all the best attributes of a deathmatch level, bar the incongruous slime pool. It starts off simply enough, but teleport traps soon take over and before you can say “Gott In Himmel”, the whole place is swarming with nasty things. And before you’ve even started, you’re missing the super-shotgun. Nightmare. More traps for you later – involving darkened tunnels, ambushes that are just out of sight, and the old “walk forward and they teleport behind you” ploy. There’s a nice little tight spot towards the end and then 4:30 seconds later you’re in the clear.

WAD-O-METER: 5



LEVEL 2 PERFECT HATRED

Numero deux is an excellent level, featuring all the deadly little skirting boards *Doom*'s architecture can come up with. The main room – various pillars suspended above a deadly sea of cacodemon-packed lava – leads to three sub areas. The first, opened up only after deft leaping from parapet to parapet, is a nasty little Baron-packed holiday, with zombie waiters and cute, little, impish waitresses. After a series of frantic switch flicking and lever pulling, area two opens up, revealing

its nasty cavernous mazy interiors and army of invisibles. Ouch. Then, when you’ve totalled everything, Monsieur Le Rocket Hands makes a grand entrance, trapped, but as deadly as ever (fig 4). Behind him the exit. Behind you a zillion rockets. Overall, stupidly hard and far, far too many barons.

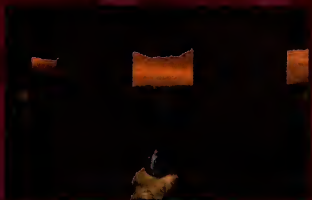
WAD-O-METER: 7



LEVEL 3 SEVER THE WICKED

The next level is a slight change in style. Out go claustrophobia and parapets, in come wide open hallways and freeway width corridors. Your aim, simply enough, is to get the red key to get inside the prison, but your way is blocked by a zillion billion monsties, and of course, a complex array of long tunnels, lift traps, and lava lakes. Notice the clever use of *Doom*'s restricted line of sight to hide essential health and ammo. Cor, and all you had to do was drop down. Overall, a dash 'em up level, running, shooting and running some more. Not too much thought needed. A little too big and a bit boring.

WAD-O-METER: 6



LEVEL 4 UNRULY EVIL

This one is really rubbish, obviously designed by American McGee's three year-old child. Very plain layout, very boring. Obvious traps and not much variety. Snooze-ola. In fact, we're not even going to bother describing it to you. So here's a really boring screenshot for a bit of form-as-meaning.

WAD-O-METER: 2

LEVEL 5 THEY WILL REPENT

Now this one's much better. A uniformly textured “inside a castle” experience with loads of overlapping, intricate hidden passageways doubling up on multiple levels, intersecting lava labyrinths and three or four layered sniping points. Nasty for the beginner this one, especially with its fully-planned and irrigated lava flow. Monster count is fairly low,

but the majority of nasties are well placed and hard to get at, often sniping through distant, high-up windows. Tunnel your way through that lot and you have to navigate the slime maze on a desperate, out-of-breath quest for just one more radiation suit. Finally, as you near the end, your health seeping through molten cracks in the floor, you have a toss up between the easy-to-reach exit and the hard-to-get BFG. The choice, as they say, is yours.

WAD-O-METER: 9



LEVEL 6 AGAINST THEE WICKEDLY

Level six is excellent. A serious you-versus-castle-Dracula situation. From a fairly innocuous looking start, you stumble across the outside of a small looking keep. Hah, small. This keep is like the Tardis. A huge high-vaulted cavern awaits you inside, packed solid with tomato monsters, barons, and all our regular friends. A central pillar in the middle acts as a teleport to each of four main areas (depending on which way you enter it), but to get to the pillar you have to wade through acres of red deadly slime. This is a huge level and will take you loads of saves to complete. There are heaps of torturous high-rise skirting boards to navigate as well as multiple hidden bits and out of the way ammo reserves. And then when you've navigated the outsidy bits, there's another showdown with the CyberLord. Cool. This would not make a good deathmatch level.

WAD-O-METER: 9



LEVEL 7 AND HELL FOLLOWED

Uh-oh. Back to the drawing board with this one. *And Hell Followed* is a fairly average wad, well thought out

but pretty dull. The action is fairly linear. Big corridors leads to sparse junctions which lead to sparser tunnels and more junctions. A couple of nice darkroom traps are set – but sticking a bunch of invisibles in a dark room is an old joke (*And a crap screenshot. Ed.*) Some attention has been paid to visuals, such as the arcane altar for the yellow key, but overall the level is yawnsville. Bar, actually, the large open area towards the end which is perfect for toting about, setting all the monsters fighting against each other. But, all in all, a pretty *Doom* average experience.

WAD-O-METER: 5



LEVEL 8 UNTO THE CRUEL

The last level of *Thy Flesh Consumed* is exactly what you would expect. Damn big and damn hard, culminating in a showdown with the (yawn) SpiderBoss. The whole level has four main areas. First, an elliptical balcony, packed solid with sarges, and deeply booby-trapped with cacos and barons. Get past this first major hurdle and you may well find yourself in an excellent “outsidy” bit, a garden if you like, with cute little towers to possess and a series of paths which lead to – aarrghhh, a nightmare jumping exercise from Hell. Much needed resources balanced atop much unneeded pillars. Leap. Save. Leap. Save. You know the drill. And then finally, once tooled up, you're ready to take on the throne room of the (snore) SpiderDemon, which is packed with all its zombie acolytes, and has a range of nice sniping windows. Kill the arachnid and it's curtains for you. The end of the game. And 30 quid well spent. Not.

WAD-O-METER: 9



BONUS LEVEL 9 FEAR

There is a secret level. It's pretty hard and pretty good. We'll let you find out how to get there and what wad-o-meter score to give it. We might as well leave you one level to discover yourself.



level, taking any leftover weapons with me to the next one. Then I played it through again, starting only with a pistol each time. That took me nine hours (slotted in between, you'll understand, copious amounts of partying, raving, drinking, gigs, films, snogging, fights, bungee jumping, surfing, and playing the guitar and so on). I also spent a good hour or so taking a gruesome charnal-soaked trip

"You can't help thinking that the repackaged Doom is a cynical way of leeching a few more pounds from a game which has already made zillions."

down memory lane, revisiting the good bits of *Knee Deep In The Dead*, *Shores Of Hell*, and *Inferno*. Do you remember Command Centre (E1M7) and its joyous multi-levelled complexity? Or the superbly excellent Containment Area (E2M2), with its booby-trapped warehouse and frightful "crushy bits"? And, of course, Mount Erebus (E3M5),

Tech specs

Memory: 4Mb RAM

Processor: 386DX

Hard Disk Space: Minimal

Graphics: VGA

Sound: All major sound cards supported

Controls: Mouse, keyboard, joystick

which I challenge anyone to complete from a pistol start and no saving?

So, all in all, I spent about 13 hours sitting three inches from my monitor in a chair which gave me backache, quaffing aspirins, while sort of half-listening, half-watching *Stars In Their Eyes* (as you do). I'd say that works out about £2.30 an hour.

In truth, there are zillions of new PC users each year, and these newbies may

not have experienced *Doom* yet. So *Ultimate Doom* will be a neat purchase for them. Cool. It is, without doubt, a classic game, every bit as scary and playable as it was a year ago. But for existing *Doom* owners, who registered shareware *Doom* when it first came out, and have bought *Doom II* and dreamt the endless strafing dreams of a *Doom*



(Above) So what's new (apart from the sky)? Well, erm... not a lot actually.

(Right) Er, no new monsters, no new weapons, just nine new maps ranging from mediocre to excellent.



addict, *Thy Flesh Consumed* is nothing short of a waste of time and money.

There are thousands of *Doom* levels circulating on the Internet, on bulletin boards, and magazine cover disks. Some of them have new graphics, new monsters and new sounds. Lots of them are rubbish, some of them are okay. And quite a few of them are really good, better than the best levels *Thy Flesh Consumed* offers. If you want to pay £30 for nine new levels, go ahead. See if I care. You have been warned. **Z**

Score 1

90

NON OWNERS OF DOOM 1:
Thy Spare Time Consumed.

Score 2

20

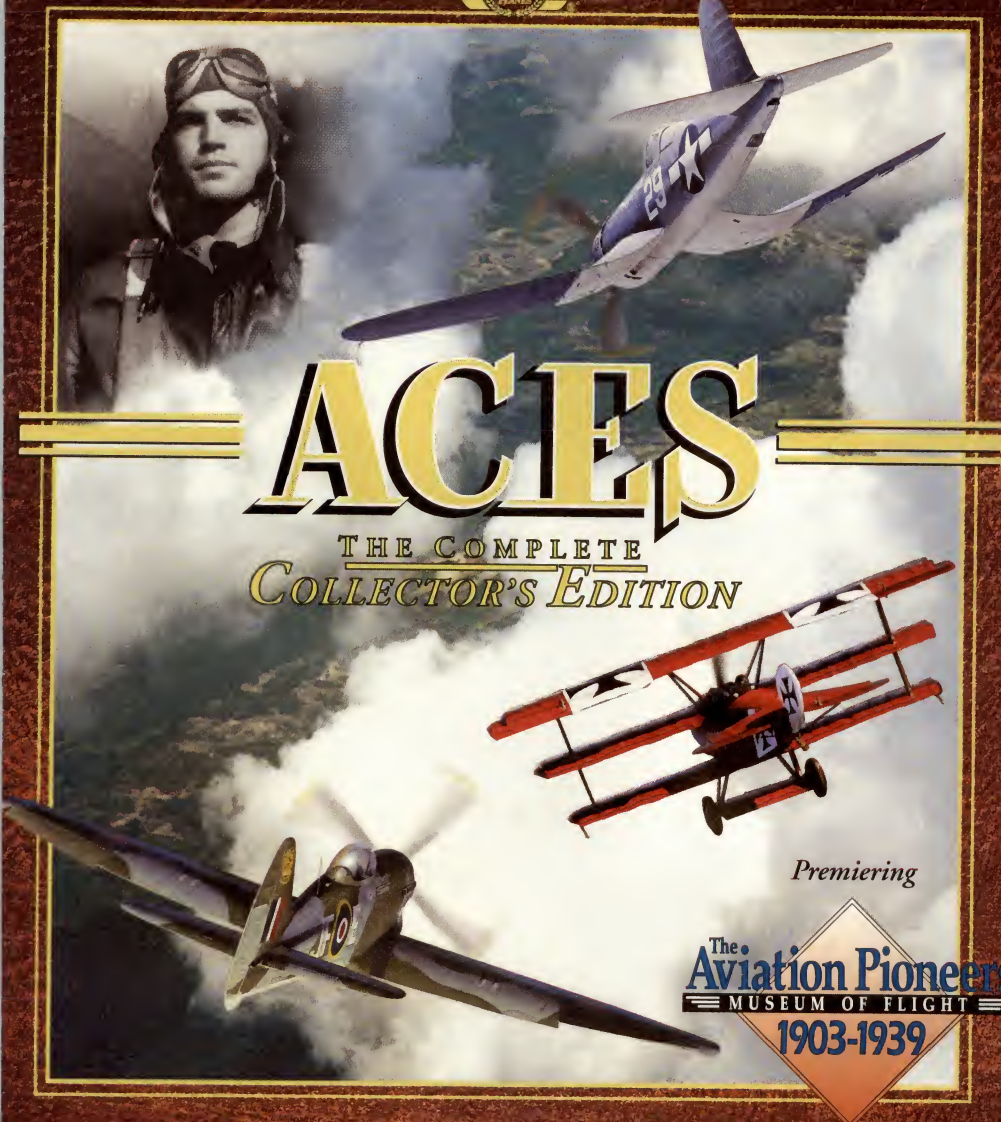
EXISTING OWNERS OF DOOM 1:
Thy Cash Consumed.

Price: £29.99 **Release Date:** Out Now

Publisher: GT Interactive

Tel: 0171 258 3791

(Left) Did I mention the nice, new sky? I did? Well, let me tell you that you can now purchase the original version of *Doom* on import from the States for a measly £6.99 from your local box shifter.



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COLLECTOR'S SERIES



Hold page nine... **Duncan MacDonald** gets caught up in "Bullfrog releases a slightly naff game" shocker!

PC
ZONE
RECOMMENDED

Hi-Octane

ACTUALLY, THE USAGE OF THE WORD "naff" might be just a tad misleading, as it isn't necessarily appropriate. So let's dispense with the tabloid approach and get Trevor MacDonald to do it in a more Channel Four Newsy style...

Trev: "A British software company, renowned for its high quality video game products, has recently released a title that – according to certain sources – has fallen short of expectations. A company spokesperson told me earlier that all criticisms were unfounded, and that the game in question "chugged along like nobody's business". And now onto the City News. Pam?..."

We're nearer the mark now, but before continuing with what the game's about, what you do and so on (which'll only take a few sentences), how about a fictional conversation between two people at Bullfrog, a few months ago...

Person One: Well, that's *Magic Carpet* squeezed dry, time to get our thinking caps on again. How about a futuristic sports sim? Based on golf? You have to kill your opponents or something?

Person Two: Not so fast! We can make some extra money first... the easy way.

Person One: Eh?

Person Two: Well, how about we create some racetracks with the *Magic Carpet* engine, and make a high speed shoot 'em up caper involving hover cars?

Person One: Oh yeah! Good idea, that won't take too long.

Person Two: Exactly. Can I have a hundred pounds please?

Person One: Only if you can think of an exciting name for it.

Person Two: Hmm... let's see... how about *Hi-Octane*?

Person One: Excellent! Here's the cash!

Cynical bastard?

Maybe I'm reading between lines that aren't there, but after ten minutes of playing *Hi-Octane*, I felt that somehow it was a bit of a swiz. It's like... well, imagine if Bullfrog were one of your favourite bands and then suddenly they released a "Christmas single". Hmmm.



Well, onto the game. You can choose from one of six "hover cars"; some are slow but well armoured, some are fast but easily damaged, while the others (as even Mystic Meg could have guessed) fall somewhere between. Then after choosing one of the six "tracks", you race the computer controlled opponents over a set number of laps (ho hum). But it's not just a question of speed, because all the cars are armed – and there are power-ups lying around to be driven over. Better machine guns, double rocket launchers, fuel boosters, you know the drill. So it's gung-ho missile toting action all the way as you race

Tech specs

Memory: 8Mb

Processor: 486DX33

Hard Disk Space: Minimal

Graphics: VGA/SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, mouse, joystick

Yes, but the screenshots...

I played *Hi-Octane* on a P-90 – it motors superbly even with the detail cranked up to 100% (unless you foolishly plump

"Bullfrog has always had a knack for making carnage look and sound good, and Hi-Octane is no exception."

along the winding uppy-downy courses, blasting away at the car in front until it blows up. Meanwhile there's a car behind you doing the same thing! (A certain amount of weaving can help.) Sometimes you need to make fuel, ammo and shield pitstops, but exactly when you do... again, you know the drill.

And that's just about it, except for the Championship option (which is exactly the same as the Single Race option, but you have to finish in the top three to move on to the next track).

for SVGA, in which case it doesn't). I wanted to try it on a 486, but the office 486 was busted and I couldn't. Sorry. But if you've played *Magic Carpet* on a 486, you'll know the kind of detail you can get away with. This'll be roughly the same, and maybe even a bit better.

I've said that *Hi-Octane* moves quickly, but to underline it further, it zips along like a (choose your own animal) with (choose your own skin burning liquid) smeared on its (choose your own external organ/organs).



(Top) If you think this looks good, wait until you see it moving (on a P-90 that is).

(Left) The four different race views give the game a very arcadey feel, while the tracks are full of power-ups and short cuts.

(Right) Zip into the pits and pick up some shopping while you're at it.

(Far right) With six different hover ships to choose from, there's never a dull moment when it's played over a network.



The need for speed?

But guess what? Sometimes complete and utter speed isn't such a good thing, especially when the complexities of the graphics engine demand that constraints are put on the distance of the horizon. It didn't matter so much in *Magic Carpet* because the "fogging" just added to the general weirdness of the whole gig. But if *Magic Carpet* had been a flight sim... hmmm, forget about it. And to a lesser extent this is the case for a car racing game such as *Hi-Octane*. Up close everything is just dandy, but as you're moving at such blinding speed for the most part, things that are miles away are suddenly upon you in a matter of seconds. So an approaching corner changes from being invisible into a hazy foggy thing and then into a fine and dandy thing in the time it takes to drop a 50p piece onto the floor – before you know it, it's behind you.

This doesn't matter so much when you're familiar with the layout of the track, but it's still visually ungratifying. For a racing game give me less graphic splendour and more perceived distance any day. (NASCAR with guns, anyone?)

Good explosions though, eh?

Bullfrog has always had a knack for making carnage look and sound good, and *Hi-Octane* is no exception. There's lots of smoke, flames, rat-a-tat ricochet sounds and big boomy explosions, but let's forget about these and get back to the game's shortfalls. We've done the visual confusion, so how about something more inherent to actual gameplay? Such as the fact that the vehicles involved are "hover cars" (fairly easy for Bullfrog to program in, I should imagine, as they're essentially magic carpets). The trouble is, though, they're too "easy" somehow, making them not much fun to drive. And while this undoubtedly makes *Hi-Octane* instantly playable, in the long haul it makes it a bit snoozy (in a 1,000 mph white-knuckled kind of way, you understand). Maybe it's just me, but I don't think so. I reckon slower, *Mad Max* style dune

buggies would have worked far better.

But I say again... it's too fast, with the result that there's not enough time to "enjoy" the destruction going on in front of you. You want to see bits of metal flying off, people's arms coming out of their sockets, hair on fire, that sort of thing. I did a brief vox-pop in the office (in other words I asked Jason the Art Ed) to find out if it was only me who felt this way, and he said this: "It's a bit confusing. You can't really see what's going on." So there you have it. The two of us speak for the world! Hallelujah!

I bet there's a network option, though

And you'd be right. Bullfrog has always stuck multi-player options in its games, and hats off to them for that. *Hi-Octane* has the facility to have up to eight players on a network, and it might work brilliantly. If it does, then hoorah for *Hi-Octane* and slide over *Doom* and *Descent* – make way for a brother.

I haven't played *Hi-Octane* over a network, but I've got a feeling that as a multi-player game it might be iffy. The problem that could easily arise, though (if my "thought experiment" wasn't too faulty) is everyone braking to a halt. You see, the main premise of the game is this: try not to get in front of anyone, because then they can shoot you.

Imagine yourself in a network game, zapping along at a squillion mph, when all of a sudden you're being shot to next Tuesday from behind. What would you do? Well, you might try weaving to and fro, but supposing that didn't work? The only alternative, obviously, is

to brake hard, in the hope that the person behind overshoots. Then (tee hee) you can attack him instead of him attacking you. But what if that person is already *au fait* with this tactic? He's waiting for you to do it, so he brakes as well, and then you have to turn around to shoot at him. And on and on.

The ultimate conclusion to this scenario would be all eight players stationary, hurling rockets at one another; they'd be better off playing *Doom*, as it's got more available weaponry. But don't forget, this is conjecture as I haven't played the network game. Maybe it's fab.

But overall?

Again, as mentioned at the beginning of the review, I reckon that *Hi-Octane* is a tiny bit of a swiz. Admittedly it's heaps better than most of the toss out at the moment, but at the end of the day it's a little on the "thin" side, with that "cobbled together" feel of a rush release. Most important of all though, is the lack of involvement you feel. *Hi-Octane* is fine for a brief period of mindless ack-acking, but is it addictive enough to have you coming back for more the next evening? **Z**

Score

83

Fast and frantic. Not Bullfrog's best but still better than most.

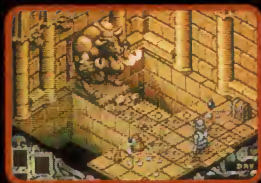
Price: £39.99 Release Date: Out now
Publisher: Bullfrog/Electronic Arts
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(Right) Although it's a racing game, it soon deteriorates into a blast-fest as you start to kill your opponents rather than overtake them.



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Xenon 2

Cadaver: Best Foreign Adventure (Generation 4) • Magic Pockets: Best Platform Game (Tilt D'Or)
Speedball 2: Game of the Year (Golden Joystick) • Xenon 2: Best Shoot 'em-up (ELSPA Awards)



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When the indigenous inhabitants of Patrick McCarthy's flat refused to sell it for some glass beads, a smallpox-infected blanket and a bottle of fire-water, he rode through their living room on horseback and trampled them to death. And he seemed like such a nice person...

Silverload

WATCHING WESTERNS AS children, we always wanted the Indians to win. They were so much cooler than the Christians in the wagons. We hated those stupid white settlers, with their horrible beards, no moustaches, their in-bred children, their appalling quick-release dungarees and their propensity for having sex with farmyard animals. Whenever one of them knelt behind the wagon to pray and copped an arrow in the face we laughed till we were sick. It was almost as funny as when the entire cast of *Little House on the Bloody Prairie* died in a multi-wagon pile-up.

As for the Waltons, all sleeping in the same bed and feeling each other's banjos under the quilt, there was nothing wrong with them that a Kamikaze pilot diving out of the sun above Walton's Mountain wouldn't cure. But that's another matter. In fact, let's get back to Western pioneers, and their charming



(Left) This chap flew over to Blighty to get his crowns done on the NHS 'cos he thought he'd save some money.

(Below left) The voice characterisations are nearly as painful as the dated graphics.

"It's touted as an adventure game for beginners – it would put the average beginner off adventure games for life."

ways of dealing with the people who already live somewhere that they want to "settle". (As in "Bang – you're dead and I live here now. That's settled...")

God bless America

The settlers in *Silverload* discovered that the land where the Indians lived contained a great deal of silver. (As in the valuable metal – nobody's been redistributing the Lone Ranger's horse with a hacksaw.) So what do the heroes of the American West, who made the country what it is today and whose

spirit lives on in the form of travelling insurance salesmen, do? They wiped out the Indians, razed their teepees to the ground, drew moustaches on their Elizabeth Hurley posters (not that she needed it) and violated their ponies with firemans' hoses. And then they

built a church, and went and sang songs to a fictitious all-seeing fairy-character about how good they all were.

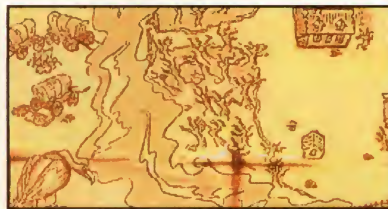
Needless to say, this didn't please the few remaining Indians. Especially the firemans' hoses. So they put a special Indian curse on the inhabitants of the town, which ensured that the people therein would never be able to touch the silver. Magically, overnight, the settlers' hands were superglued into boxing gloves. (No they weren't. Ed.) Oh, alright, they turned them all into werewolves. Apparently, one of the



Indians had done a correspondence course in Middle European Folklore, and knew that werewolves prefer gold. (They'd rather die than be seen wearing silver because they don't think it looks expensive enough.) So there we have Premise One: Scary Town.

Premise Two: Gophers

If it weren't for Gophers, half the Western people in the world would be much shorter, with people getting clean away during horse chases. (Note for cyberpunks: a "Gopher" wasn't always something you use to "surf" the "net". In fact, it used to be a big hairless bird that specialised in digging holes in the desert for horses to fall down.) Thus, the hero of this »



(Left) Most developers were producing games with graphics like this three or four years ago.

(Right) Sometimes the characters are so badly drawn and look so different from picture to picture, you think they're different people.

(Below) "Look me in the eyes and tell me you love me." No chance mate! Hope you enjoy the pants!



“ game was riding about in the desert when his horse fell down a 70-foot gopher-hole and broke its leg. Quickly, he shot it and ate its saddle (Western tradition). Before you know it, he's lost, near to death, and Premise One and Two are joined: he's offered the chance of a replacement horse (and saddle) by some wagon train-type Christians who've had their child stolen by bulletproof monsters, but only if he finds and saves the kid. Game on.

Well, sort of

Deducing that the monsters came from the nearby town of Silverload, you set off in that direction. In fact, you soon find out that if you try to go in any other direction, you die. Suddenly and annoyingly. This happens all the time, throughout the game. You might have two (or, on special occasions, three) options open to you, but only one is correct – get it wrong and it's instant death. Just a single badly drawn picture and you're dumped out of the game into DOS. Imagine the most annoying thing you can think of – any sentence by a children's TV presenter, say – and double it. This is worse than that.

This linear approach and unforgiving design isn't the only thing wrong with

Tech specs

Memory: 4Mb

Processor: 386/25

Hard Disk Space: Minimal

Graphics: VGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Mouse

the game, by any means. The graphics are risible, taking the form of badly drawn still pictures. That's all. Retro, eh? Occasionally a drawing wobbles about by way of acknowledging the development of animation, but generally the message seems to be that games should have no truck with new-fangled experiments of that ilk.

The Quiet Man

You interact with other characters by selecting a question at the foot of the screen – which, being a Clint Eastwood-type, you ask silently. They respond, generally at some length, the last phrase of their answer appearing in a speech bubble. If there are further details available, you'll see a highlighted word to click on. A



straightforward system, if hardly new. But even this is frustrating, as clicking on one question sometimes elicits an answer to a different one. Believe it or not, there are problems with "collision detection" (for want of a better phrase) on the *questions*. And it's not as if they're jammed together, either, they're inches apart on screen. And even if you don't click on the highlighted extra info in the speech bubble, you still sometimes get the extra dialogue.

The graphics are so bad that some of the characters look different from picture to picture, so that you wonder where the new guy popped up from. And there are "disappearing people": a man stands behind a counter, you click to move behind the counter and he disappears. You click to the front and he's back. Then there's the floor. Wherever you go, if you look down at the floor, you'll see wooden floorboards. Obviously sensitive about sully your nice booties on nasty sawdust, sand and horse crap, you take a few planks with you to fling beneath your feet as you move about. You lateral thinker, you.

A classic, then?

It's linear, poorly implemented and so frustrating your brain will shrivel to the size of a raisin. It's touted, in PR-speak, as an "adventure game for beginners". This is accepted code for "it's crap". And it would put the average beginner off adventure games for life. Z

Score

07

A possible game of the year contender.

Price: £39.99 **Release Date:** July

Publisher: Psygnosis

Tel: 0151 282 3000



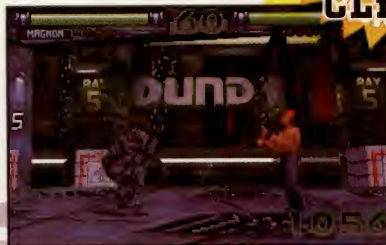
With a title like this you could be excused for thinking that *FX Fighters* is made for a console.

Paul Rigby and Derek Dela Fuente say otherwise.



(Right) The eight characters are far from equal. The weaker fighters are easier to master, but tend to be slower and have less moves.

(Below) Turn the texture-mapping off if your PC's not too hot.



FX FIGHTERS

FIGHTING GAMES ARE A RARE commodity on the PC. Viewed by Mr Cursors the world over as a beige box filled with "scary things", regarded as a more mature investment than a Sega, and pooh-poohed as a podium for the more cerebral side of gaming (hexagon based, interactive, 3D turn-based role playing adventure games – with tanks), PC fighting games – or "beat 'em ups" as our articulate console cousins call them – are not so much "not in" but (build up for Joke Of The Millennium) "knocked out". (You're fired. Ed.)

FX Fighters shall address, redress, and completely reupholster this myth. It will make *StreetFighter* look like those fights you arranged between *Star Wars* figures in your shed, or *Mortal Kombat* like the time you scorched your sister's Barbie. The man behind this game is none other than Monsieur 3D himself, Jez "Starglider" San, who has been expounding the virtues of 3D polygon-based games since the early twilight days of the Commodore Amiga and Atari ST. *FX Fighters* is the first game to

use his new patented 3D "algorithm" BRender (pronounced "Brenda"). To most, a fighting game is nothing more than a glorified encounter with your keyboard or joystick where you bash a few keys or tug the joystick for dear life hoping that a few moves, signalled

almost accidentally, will be the correct ones to bludgeon the opponent into submission. Not so with *FX Fighters*. Think of *StreetFighter*, its presentation, controls and interface and move it on a quantum leap and you have *FX Fighters* in all its glory.



Mr 3D – Jez San

Meet Mr San. Jez San. The man behind such treasured titles of yore as *Starglider 1 & 2*, *Creature Shock* and *Birds of Prey*. The man who broke new ground with *Starglider's* 3D graphics. The man at the helm of Argonaut Software.

Lauded in the industry as a leading light, nay Belisha beacon, of radical views and ideas – Jez's ever burgeoning development team is set to number 200 by the end of the year. What's more the company is currently working on a host of new games and has just launched BRender, the company's new 3D package. With this in mind it was time for *PC Zone* to pay Jez a visit and find out just what the future holds for Argonaut...

PC Zone: There have been at least three similar graphics products released in the last few months, so what makes you so sure there's room for BRender?

Jez San: Well for starters BRender is written for software developers. But end users will benefit, of course, because they'll be able to buy better games. BRender is a real-time 3D rendering package that comes as a library and games developers will imbibe that library beside their game so that they can use the features on offer to full graphical effect – things like Gouraud shading, texture mapping, environment mapping, light sourcing, and so on. Sure, there are lots of packages around and 3D chips are also about to arrive, but they're all incompatible with each other. So we've tried to make BRender fairly global.

PC Zone: So presumably developers should be able to produce games faster – and therefore more cheaply. Yet any savings made from reduced development costs never really seem to benefit the general public. The game still seems to go on sale at the standard price, whether or not the developer has managed to save the odd grand or two.

Jez San: Well to be fair the developer gets the smallest slice, so it doesn't really matter if the game takes six months to create or a year because the developer is already underpaid. I would like to see things improved in that area. But I don't really see how any time saved in game development would affect the retail price. What it will do, I believe, is make games easier to develop, so companies will end up making better games by using their time more productively – by testing for longer and generally spend more time developing and making sure things are better overall. There's still a lot to be done to improve the quality of games.

PC Zone: With the buying up of many of the smaller development houses a lot of games are starting to become "products" with little identity and a very obvious American style blandness (probably in an effort to appeal to a wider audience). How do you feel about this and do you think it

will eventually destroy originality? Do you think it's time that publishers recognised that each country has different game requirements and that writing a game which is bland enough to pass the German censorship laws and the Sega/Nintendo moral codes just compounds the problem?

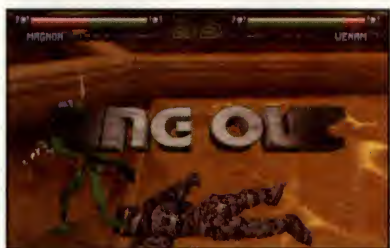
Jez San: With the moral codes issue Sega always came down like a ton of bricks on blood and violence, whereas Nintendo wanted games to offer all-round family entertainment. But I believe this has changed and Nintendo is now on a par with Sega. I don't feel that the moral code ethics will affect things any more seeing as the new rating system on game boxes displays the target audience. I think we shall now see more programs not pandering to the moral codes. As for products being sanitised by big publishers, that's always going to go on but then they'll also always be a new upstart company that breaks the mould and is successful and turns the tables on everyone. In a nutshell, as the biggies market and play safe with dull titles, so more exciting titles will start to emerge.

PC Zone: What can we look forward to seeing from Argonaut in the coming year and what specific machine will you be targeting?

Jez San: We are doing a lot of work for PC CD-ROM and we've several games due in the coming months. *FX Fighters*, of course, our exciting 3D fighting game, which plays as well as any other fighting game but looks a lot better! Later in the year we have a Sci-Fi action game and some interesting adventure titles, which take place undersea and in space, and even some games set in the Antarctic, so we have a wide variety. We've also produced some new 3D chips that you'll see in PC and video machines in the coming years.

The next big thing will be set-top boxes where games will come via the telephone lines. It's just starting to happen. In about three years there'll be the hardware. There will, eventually, be a mass market for downloading games via cable or down a telephone line.

People talk about lots of video footage not adding anything to a game. Now think of a game where you can actually control the actor in the film footage, where it has no pre-set moves. Suppose the actor was digitised with BRender and BRender was the 3D real display system that was showing the actor from any angle – you could walk him along and do things like you would in real life – but the difference is it would actually look real! Wouldn't that be brilliant? Well, the good news is that we're slowly but surely reaching that point.



(Left) In true all-in-wrestlin' style, you can either beat your opponent unconscious or throw him or her out of the ring.

(Below) Three or four hit combos and special holds add to the action.

On the surface, *FX* is a fairly typical, regimented fighting game, with a set-up resplendent with all the usual features. Choose your fighter, configure your joystick, set up time per round, number of rounds, amount of bouts and the difficulty level from one (for wimps) through five (for ninjas) right up to seven (for big oily sailors). But delve deeper and you'll find some finely tuned nuances like texture-mapped floors and backgrounds, though you really need a 486/66 to see this game at its best.

Pick 'n' mix

The fighting arena for *FX Fighters* is no less than the Universe – peppered with individual planets housing their own gruesome challenges. Pick your player to enter the tournament mode where the best of the pack comes out on top, choose the safer lily-livered "bystander" option where you watch the others fight, or simply fight each

Tech specs

Memory: 8Mb

Processor: 486/25

Hard Disk Space: 5Mb

Graphics: VGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Joystick, keyboard



(Right) Polygon and pixel perfect it might be, however it must be said that the collision detection is not as accurate as SSF2T, but then it doesn't look like this does it?

(Below) Two-player mode can't be beaten, but if you're on your own, the tournament mode will keep you more than busy.



opponent individually in a sort of "friendly" (or maybe "unfriendly" would be more appropriate) one-on-one bout.

Each of the eight fighters has a whopping range of 40 moves (some of which are super secret), half of which are very tricky to access at the start but

and boy, are they fearsome.

The movements of the characters are impressive and in keeping with their own peculiar personalities. Venam, for instance, looks like a giant locust thingy, and one of his best moves is a vicious, face-chomping, lunging action.

"Think of Streetfighter, its presentation, controls and interface, and move it on a quantum leap and you have FX Fighters in all its glory."

become second nature once you've learned to know and love your fighter. Admittedly a fair few are evasive side steps or defensive stances but a good proportion are aggressive ninja ones,

And we've got to hand it to Argonaut, the fluidity of the movement is beautifully smooth and very fast. From grappling, punching and kicking, to mindless jumping and er, jiggling about

– there's a clever way to win each fight if you apply a bit of strategic thinking. This is no hell-for-leather, punch-at-will clubbing fest, subtlety is the name of the game (*I thought it was FX Fighters. Ed.*) unless you pick a huge gormless fighter whose sheer bulk will win the day (and they say size doesn't matter, eh?).

So the moves, the settings and the challenges are perfectly tuned. And as for the overall look of FX... well, yet again this is top-notch. If you can appreciate that each character is made up of about 90 quadrillion polygons, utilising cutting-edge 3D technology and Silicon Graphics machines to produce nigh on arcade quality graphics, you'll realise that this is no run-of-the-mill game. What we have here is the next generation of fighting games – a feat of programming, gaming and visual expertise. **Z**



Score

93

Pips the likes of SF2 and Mortal Kombat to the post – the best PC beat 'em up yet.

**Price: £39.99 Release Date: Out Now
Publisher: Philips/GTE Tel: 0171 911 3000**

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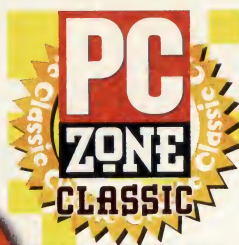
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[illegible]



The original *Micro Machines* was an absolute stonker. **Charlie Brooker** does some bizarre stuff with the sequel.

Micro Machines 2

THERE'S BEEN QUITE A LOT OF TALK recently about how having a top-end PC has become the latest crass "lads" status symbol. Yes, it seems that aside from bragging about how fast their car is, how loud their stereo can go, and how many low-flying aircraft they can knock out of the sky with their nobs, "lads" up and down the nation have taken to boasting about the size of their hard drives or the speed of their processors. Owning a Pentium 90 with 16Mb of RAM, a 1 Gig hard drive and a quad-speed CD (not forgetting a foundation-quaking pair of speakers either side of the 95 inch monitor) is

the equivalent of being a 7-foot tall, Porsche-driving, kick-boxing, model-shagging, brewery-quaffing, kong-cocked stallion. Which is a bit sad really.

It's a bit sad because we've recently been seeing more and more games designed with this kind of audience in mind. I'm not talking about tragic "shag-simulators" like *Blind Date*. No, no, no, no. I'm talking about all these pretty-in-appearance, wafer-thin-in-content interactive movies, and drawn-out FMV-a-thons. The sort of thing which requires a PC as powerful as money will allow, which impresses your mates, and makes the more imbecile owners

drool all over their keyboards. And quite frankly, I'm just sick to the pit of my stomach with it all. Whatever happened to the old-school video games? The ones that were more fun to play than to look at? Where the hell have they been hiding that priceless drug called gameplay?

Well, I've found it. It's alive and kicking, and it tastes better than ever. It's nestling away inside *Micro Machines 2* – a game that proves once and for all that you don't need Gouraud shading and 15 million polygons to make a brilliant game.

Why Miss Jones... you're beautiful

Look at the screenshots. Doesn't look too special, really, does it? Not too far removed from a 16-bit console game. Bloody primitive. The video game equivalent of cave painting.

Not quite. I like 'em. They're neat, bright, functional and... well, they're dinky, aren't they? Cute without being sickening. More importantly, they zip about the screen at a fair old rate of knots – 60 frames a second if you want specifics. The poor old PC has always been a bit of a duffer when it comes to handling slick, console-style scrolling, but Codemasters has pulled it off perfectly here. The sounds are just as dinky too – tons of neat little skidding and screeching sounds, clangs, crashes and taunting asides from the commentator. Smashing.

(Right) The little hovercraft things are absolutely tops and they behave pretty much how you'd expect them to.

(Below right) The variety in courses and vehicles makes *MM2* a really smart and (believe it or not) fun game.





(Left) Creating your own vehicles is tremendous fun and offers enormous opportunities to be rude.

(Below) There are loads of courses to choose from now with far more variety than in the original.



But the real masterstroke is the gameplay. It's immaculate. We're talking all-time classic stuff here. In the gameplay stakes, *Micro Machines 2* ranks alongside other hallowed names such as (take a deep breath...) *Tetris*, *Street Fighter 2*, *Doom*, and *Super Bomberman*. And what do all these games have in common? Simplicity of design seamlessly interwoven with depth of gameplay. And a multi-player mode.

Yes. I'm afraid that's right. You're going to need *at least one friend* if you're going to get the most out of this. Try taking a bath or calling one of those 0898 partyline things if you don't already have any.

Head to Head to Head

Micro Machines 2 will allow up to four players to compete, simultaneously, on a single PC (if you don't have a joypad, the maximum is three). Playing the game



(Left) The graphics, although simple, have a certain charm about them don't you think?

Micro Machines Construction Set

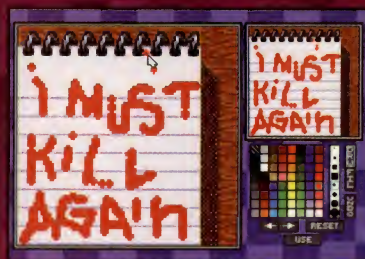


Oh, alright then. It's all very well having a bit of faultless arcade hi-jinks from time to time, but you know what us PC users are like. Reared on a diet of endless option lists, whopping great 250-page manuals, and gut-busting longevity in our games, we tend to get a bit scared by something as audacious as a no-frills top-down arcade racing game. We want something extra – something you definitely couldn't get on a common-or-garden Mega Drive.

Fear not, oh speccy one. Tucked away inside every copy of *Micro Machines 2* is this little wonder – the Construction Kit. This gem does just what you'd expect it to – it gives you the opportunity to create your own courses from scratch, or simply spruce up a few existing ones. And, just like the rest of the game, it's designed to be simple to pick up and use.

Every little thing can be messed about with. You can alter the vehicle graphics, the obstacles, the flooring... the lot. You can even make like a God and change the weather conditions with a mere click of the mouse. Ahhh, it's just like being a kid again, building ramps for your Tonka toys on your bedroom floor, except this time round it's more fun because instead of having to tidy everything away before Dad shouts at you, you can save your little personal Brands Hatch to disk, and effortlessly summon it back again whenever you fancy a race. Bliss.

Ahem. I'd just like to point out that anyone who actually spends a lot of time in this section of the game really is



a bit sad. I was just doing it for the sake of research. Here you witness my progress as I struggle to create my own special *Micro Machines* course, which takes place on Jeffrey Dahmer's breakfast table. I cheated a bit... the (extremely) basic paint program that lets you draw the objects themselves is a pig to use with the mouse, so instead of starting from scratch, I simply took a few existing graphics and modified them a little to give off that elusive "serial killer" vibe. A few minutes et voilà! That dull looking paintpot is transformed into a bloodied, torn-out human eyeball. The "notepad" graphic was easily transformed with a few scrawled letters – note the bizarre mixture of upper and lower case – what a giveaway, it's a classic psychotic characteristic. Then, a few random daubs of blood later, my course is complete. Hooray. Perfect for racing those cute little dragsters around.

It's the voices, you know. They make me do these things. And they reward me with songs in the night. In my head. In the night. Can't you see? Why don't you understand? Must I kill again to make them see? Stop it! Get out! Get out of my room and leave me alone to play!



(Right) Choose any one of a weird number of people.

(Far right) That's a ramp that is. You'd never guess, would you?



“ couldn't be simpler; you race like billy-o against each other, using just a couple of buttons to control your movement (left, right, accelerate, brake). Once you've played it for five minutes you'll be hooked. I guarantee it. Hear that? I said I GUARANTEE IT. The winner is the one who either a) finishes all allotted laps before anyone else, or b) fills up his or her "bonus gauge" by overtaking the others several times in a row.

There's a huge variety of courses and vehicles on offer (far more than the original version), including buggies for the beach, Monster Trucks racing along xylophones, and even dragsters circling a toilet seat (top marks to Codemasters for making the commentator bellow "Hey! Someone forgot to flush the toilet!" whenever one of you drops down

"Once you've played Micro Machines 2 for five minutes you'll be hooked. I guarantee it. It's a piece of bulletproof video game design. Pure, mindless fun."

the pan – it's really totally unnecessary and is therefore amusing). The courses fall into several different difficulty ratings and the "pro" routes will see you spending approximately 95% of your time spinning off the track and into oblivion while spitting out more f-words than Joe Pesci uses in *Goodfellas* and *Raging Bull* put together.

Tech specs

Memory: 4Mb

Processor: 386/25

Hard Disk Space: Minimal

Graphics: VGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, joystick

And er... that's it really. It's as simple as that. Not much more to add. It's a piece of bulletproof video game design. Pure, mindless fun – and there's not much of that to be had anywhere these days. So you can take your poncey intro sequences, and your multi-directional light sourcing, glue it to your svga mode (which in turn is stapled to that

17-button joystick you're so proud of), and shove the lot of it right up your virtual bottom. Take a break from all that hi-tech, hi-falutin', vacuous hoo-hah. If you want a short, sharp shot of effortless, immediate gameplay, then this is it. Get your wallet out of mothballs now for *Micro Machines 2*, and lap it up, Essex boy. Lap it right up. **Z**

(Right) Some of the levels seem to be specifically designed to be more fun in multi-player mode.



Puerile Contest Alert!

That's right, y'all. It's competition time again, with a superb mystery prize (which may or may not involve free money and sex) to the reader who designs the most lewd and disgusting *Micro Machines* course imaginable, using the Construction Kit.

And we don't want any half-arsed soft porn either. Oh, no. We want really shocking filth. The sort of thing that could land us in prison were we to actually *print* it. Believe me, it'll have to be *utterly disgusting* to impress us. We want your entries to be so *smutty* that their very smuttiness ceases to be amusing, and simply becomes sad, sick, and depressing. So get to work.

Bear in mind that *Micro Machines* features "slippery patches" and things you can "hop" over. Don't forget to redraw the cars to look like a big, hairy penis and remember: the more puerile, tasteless and depraved, the better.

N.B. We kid you not, this really is a genuine competition.

WIN!

Score

92

Timeless console-style action on the PC. Matchless fun for two or more players.

Price: £16a Release Date: July

Publisher: Codemasters

Tel: 01926 814132

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Boring, full of padding and unable to act. **Paul Lakin** and the interactive movie have always had a lot in common. So we teamed him up with *The Vortex* to see if either of them was showing signs of improvement.



The Vortex

SOMETHING IS ROTTEN IN THE STATE of Denmark. However that has nothing to do with *The Vortex* (sequel to *Quantum Gate*) which sets its boundaries a lot wider. The year is 2057 and something is rotten in the planet of earth. Indeed things have got so bad that it is predicted (probably by MORI or someone) that by the year 2085 all life will be extinguished. You can guess the reasons. Overpopulation, pollution, exhaustion of the world's resources, English teams playing too many matches in a season. All the usual stuff really. There are two ways to sort it: cut down the size of the Premiership or send out a special expedition to planet AJ3903 in search of a precious mineral (Iridium Oxide if you're interested) that can restore the Earth by means that are never fully explained.

This being *The Vortex* rather than *Championship Manager 2* it is the second option that is selected. Under the auspices of the United Nations (yep, they're still going – someone's got to keep all those limo companies in business) an expedition is sent to the planet. There's a problem. Of course there's a problem. This problem is of the large insects with homicidal

tendencies variety. So the UN reaches for the large swatters and giant fly spray and battle commences.

Holding out for a hero

The hero of the film (*The Vortex* is a film rather than a game) is Drew Griffiths "A young medical student running away from a tragic past"; probably too many nights in the medics bar drinking beer out of a bucket and sticking Mars Bars up his bottom. Half of *The Vortex* is taken up with piecing together exactly what that past is.

After a disastrous sortie, Griffiths is nearly killed and wakes up on the planet surface and makes a few alarming discoveries. Firstly the insects are not insects at all but actually look remarkably like Jennifer Saunders. Secondly the United Nations' motives may not be as entirely altruistic as they initially appeared (well, nothing new there then). To make matters worse – or more confusing at least – Drew starts having weird dreams and seeing images from his past. You know these are images from his past because Drew says "Bizarre – these appear to be images from my past". Not the greatest piece of dialogue perhaps but undeniably informative.

Come Play With Me

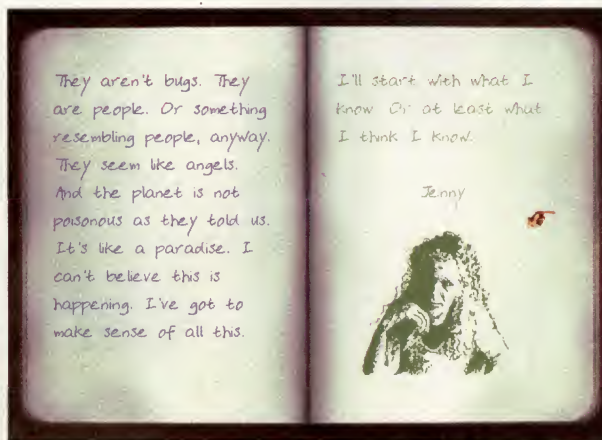
The Vortex is not a game but an interactive movie. As the film progresses icons appear on screen which can affect the development of the plot. There are question icons which represent specific questions which you can ask – it's up to you who you ask and when. There are also action icons such as look, listen, remember and action (i.e. do something, take the initiative). Emotion icons allow Drew to throw tantrums, sob his eyes out or be incredibly balanced and reasonable (you old Libran, you). These displays of emotion seem to be the actions which have the most significant effect on the development of the storyline. As in adventure games right back to the dim but glorious *Monkey Island* there are text boxes with options for conversational gambits and an on-screen hand for movement.

Although *The Vortex* is not a game (I'll probably manage to say that three or four more times during this review), it is supposedly interactive so I'm going to have a quick go at the icon system. Firstly it obviously limits interaction since you can only do things when the icons are present, more seriously since the icons tend to appear in ones or twos »



(Left) The funny looking woman in the box is one of the aliens that you can ultimately cop off with – if you try hard enough.

(Far left and middle) Argh! Nutters!



(Left) They aren't bugs... they're people! Gasp. Your journal reveals your insights into what's going on.

(Far left) It's a map 'innit? Oh, and some funny clicky icon things.



«you get the feeling that you're very much being led by the game – it's rather like having someone behind you saying "Don't you think you ought to talk to the bald guy with wings?". In the conversations you can use all the lines in the options box, one after the other – they don't lead you off into new areas from which there's no getting back.

"It's all very much return to the Garden of Eden, rediscover the purity of Mother Earth, wear flowers in your hair, and write lots of boring acoustic songs."

All of these are fairly par for the course whinges about an interactive movie since even on three CDs it can only contain a limited amount of video and so only a limited variety of plot. What was a bit more irritating was the amount of times an option (usually action) flashed up so quickly that by the time you'd moved the mouse the option had gone again. Maybe I'm just getting old. (Getting? Ed.)

Still, on the plus side, it's all fairly intuitive (which is no bad thing since there's precious little in the way of

instructions) and runs reasonably smoothly. It's not supremely interactive but is more so than most of its ilk.

Mariella Frostrup

Okay, that's the game side dealt with. What about *The Vortex* as a film? Well it's better acted than most interactive movies – I'd even go as far as to say

it's quite well acted. (Steady on, Ed.) Some of the backgrounds look a bit crap (almost EGA-ish if truth be told), but the video sequences are watchable. The only real downer are the endless "flying above the treetops" sequences. At times you think you're watching some dreadful World Of Disney nature programme. Still you can (and should) skip past these.

As for the writing. Well for me there's rather too much hippy shit in there. It's all very return to the Garden of Eden, rediscover the purity of Mother Earth,

(Left) There is some seriously weird stuff going on here. What the hell is going on with that scary red face thing?

(Below left) To test your purity, the weirdos put you through a session of 20 questions.

(Below) The quality of the video footage isn't bad... mainly due to the fact that it all happens in relatively small windows.

(Far below) Weird-bloke and odd-woman argue over your virtues.

Tech specs

Memory: 8Mb

Processor: 486 SX (486 DX recommended)

Hard Disk Space: 5Mb and Windows 3.1

Graphics: VGA (SVGA recommended)

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Mouse

wear flowers in our hair and write lots of very long, boring acoustic songs. (On the plus side one of the characters has a bizarre hang up about killing Belgians.) The script is rather too full of this sort of right on ethno crap ("I'm deeply aware of my effect on my environment") as well as clumsy plot development lines (as in the "Bizarre – these appear to be images from my past" comment I mentioned earlier.)

But hold on there bald eagle. The film/game/interactive movie is rescued by its structure. A cynic may claim that the use of flashbacks is a cunning way of being able to use the same pieces of video time and again. But when was I ever cynical? Because *The Vortex* is about piecing together memories as well as simply progressing through a quest, it is pretty engrossing. It's actually a fairly intelligent plot. A bit like a film on Channel 4 it can be pretentious, irritating and PC, but it is also intriguing and imaginative.

Scores on the doors

Okay, as a game *The Vortex* is bollocks. Too limited and too bog standard in its control system. As an interactive movie, however, it's a lot better. It's slick, professional (with the exception of a few a few dodgy backgrounds) and reasonably imaginative. There's enough variety and plot options to make the title "interactive movie" less of a breach of the trades description act than these things usually are. All the usual provisos still apply – do you really want to pay £40 for a film? etc, but this is a good example of its kind. Still not a true interactive movie but a step in the right direction. **Z**

Score

80

Interactive movie in good acting shock.

Price: £39.99 Release Date: Out Now

Publisher: Warner Interactive

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MAXIM

Perfect General II



Being a master of the classic (and oft-used) "Run Away While Screaming Battle Strategy", **Paul Presley** seemed less than ideal to review an in-depth hyper-real wargame. So we gave it to him anyway.

AHEM... WARGAMES! NO, NO, COME back, they're not that bad, really. After all, *Battle Isle 2* was a wargame, and so was *Dune II* and *Command & Conquer*. They might not have looked like wargames (being endowed with graphics and all that), but deep down, underneath all that gloss, pre-rendered imagery and hype, they were wargames, plain and simple. *Perfect General II* is a wargame. Can you see where I'm going with this?

Tell us, tell us

You shouldn't judge a game by the reputation of its genre. *Perfect General II* has little in common with those early hex-based nightmare battle simulators and if you can ignore the fact that it does use hexes, (as did *Battle Isle*, remember), you're going to find that it's a clever, challenging and, goshdarnit, addictive strategy game. That's not to say that the game is without faults (I'll cover those in a minute/ten minutes/hour – insert personal reading speed here), but it is good, very good. If you're looking for something that makes *Battle Isle 2* look as challenging as a game of conkers, here's your man, er, army officer.

What's it lacking?

A decent manual for a start. I would have thought that it was *de rigueur* for a wargame to come with some sort of tutorial these days, but unfortunately *Perfect General II* is supplied without one. This means that despite the potential enjoyment to be had from the game, newcomers won't be able to get into it as easily as they might and could even be put off entirely.

The other thing that may discourage first timers is the lack of proper graphics (to give them their technical name). You can easily recognise good graphics – they are the ones that make

Tech specs

Memory: 4Mb

Processor: 386/25

Hard Disk Space: 4Mb/30Mb

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: All major cards

Controls: Keyboard, mouse

you go, "Ooh, aren't they nice". Graphics that won't reduce *Perfect General II* to the tawdry level of every other specialist wargame on the market. The game may use SVGA, but all that means is that the basic icons and lacklustre scenery are in high-res.

What's it, er, not lacking?

"Spend time with it and you'll really become hooked," is the familiar battle cry of a game reviewer and, loathe as I am to follow tradition, it's true of *Perfect General II*. That is, you *need* to spend time with it before you understand all the ins and outs and then, once this heady plateau has been reached, you can start to get into it. Once you've ignored the basic graphics and overcome the limitations of the manual (you are feeling sleepy etc...) you'll start tearing your hair out in chunks as one cunning plan after another is humiliatingly crushed by your enemy.

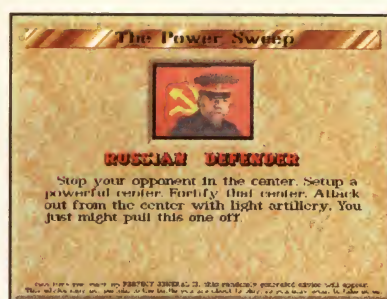
It's worth persevering because once you know how to use it, *Perfect General II* really comes alive as a wargame. It's staggeringly easy to plan and execute stratagems and the control interface is so straightforward that it might have

(Left) Strategy is all important – as are your hex placements.

(Below) No double yellow lines here, just a map for your tanks.



(Right) Before each game certain, ahem, well known soldiers (programmers no doubt) offer advice on some of the scenarios. Probably not the one you'll be playing, but still...



been designed by Apple. Quite simply, it allows you to concentrate on utilising your forces to achieve the objectives in hand, rather than forcing you to waste time working out what functions the buttons have, what each unit represents and where all your forces are.

It might have been preferable to have scenarios that were a little more defined in their objectives, as most of them are simply about fighting the enemy until the game is over; whoever has the most points is the winner. It would be better to have actual mission objectives to complete and tasks to perform rather than plain and simple fighting, but at least there are more than enough different landscapes and the addition of a second player often takes the game to even greater gameplay heights.

(Above) A map of the overall area is constantly available, allowing you to see just how badly you're losing.

(Right) Select your firepower from the purchase screen.



Wargames and the history of the world, Part One

To sum up then, *Perfect General II* is... well, try Rommel surging across the desert, Hitler moving into France, 'Nam leading the Yanks a merry dance, or even those fearsome Zulus storming through the British. (Okay, okay, we've got

the idea. Ed.) This is an admirable sequel to *Perfect General* – it's complex, challenging and, most importantly, fun. Watch out because before you know it, you'll be addicted. The game certainly succeeded in firing me up – if you feel in urgent need of a shot of adrenaline, it's just the ticket. **Z**

Battle of the Boing

Although historians quite rightly regard conflicts such as World War II and the Vietnam action to be among the most definitive battles of our time, one skirmish that often gets overlooked in the annals of historic warfare is the time when two tiny but dedicated groups of warriors faced each other beneath the sun-baked shores of Southport pleasure beach – a battle known today as the Battle of the Boing.

How the war started remains a mystery, but it is thought that the spark that ignited the fire came about when Joseph Simpkins, aided by his leading field commanders, led a guerrilla-style raid on the bouncy castle situated near the rear of the Southport Pleasure Beach. At the time the castle was occupied by three hardened veterans of the Simpkins Campaigns (as they have been chronicled), having faced and lost numerous encounters with the fearsome trio many times before (in the school playground and at the local youth club).

With the castle under Simpkins' control, the rest of the amusement centre soon fell and the local inhabitants were forced to pay war duties to the two field commanders in the form of lunch money and bottle tops. It was only when a counter-insurgency group (under the command of one Captain Paul Prezley – the name has been changed to protect the innocent) was sent to retake the bouncy castle that the deciding battle of the war was fought. As the rescue team started delivering their ammo (spitballs fired through cunningly crafted peashooter/drinking straw devices), the enemy started to give chase only to be led straight into the waiting arms of Simpkins' mother, who Captain Prezley had very bravely called ahead of time. With victory under their belts, Prezley's insurgency group then proceeded to the castle and went home some time after 4.15 pm, just in time to watch their favourite cartoon, *Hong Kong Phooey*, on telly.

Score

82

Remember how *Battle Isle* was actually quite good? Well, so is this.

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Publisher: Mirage Software
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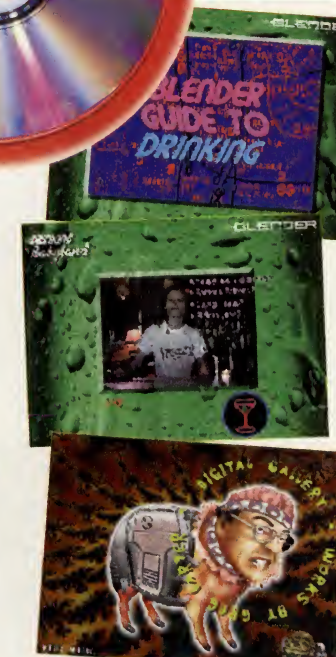
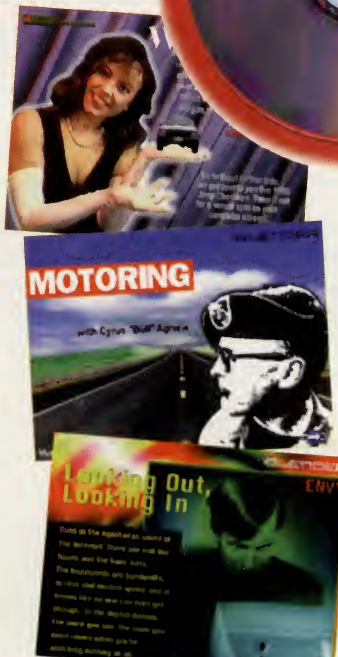
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When asked to review *The Orion Conspiracy* Teresa Maughan thought she was off to test drive the new Ford Escort with Jeremy Clarkson – swoon! Unfortunately for her, that turned out not to be the case.

The Orion Conspiracy



IF THE ORION CONSPIRACY WAS INVITED to a cocktail party it would arrive dressed with the sartorial elegance and table manners of Les Patterson, the diplomacy of Freddie Star and the conversational skills of Bernard Manning. Uncouth, xenophobic, homophobic and downright sexist, *The Orion Conspiracy* is offensive with a capital "O". It may have a warning on the front of the box – "contains strong language" and an ESRB rating, but these don't prepare you for the completely gratuitous use of foul language and bigoted storyline.

Is it really that obnoxious?

Don't believe me, huh? Let me give you some examples. Ask Brookes what it's like to work there and she replies, "I hate it when men assume you want their dicks. Do you know I called Ward down to the board room and f**k'd him right there and then on the goddamn floor. I scared the shit outta him." In the bar Ward does his bit for race relations with the immortal words:

"Listen Irish, we got niggers, kikes, slant-eyes, spics and asians all cooped up here." Ask Lowe how he relaxes and, wallop, he launches into a blatantly sexist tirade about how G-Spot (Brookes) likes her men hung like a horse and with the stamina of an ox. No pleasant hobbies like Origami or photography for him! And that's just a taste of what's in store – wait till you experience the homophobia. My name isn't Mary Whitehouse, honest, (I laughed like a drain along with the rest of them in the first scene of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*), but strong language should only be used sparingly and appropriately to gain maximum effect, otherwise it adds nothing to the storyline and serves only to shock and insult.

About that storyline...

You play Devlin, a clapped-out Space Station researcher who after suffering ruined health because of the corporation wars is retired early and ostracised. After losing his wife he then discovers that his only son Danny, who is stationed on Cerberus, has been involved in a fatal accident. He returns to the space station for the funeral and discovers that Danny's death isn't as straightforward as it looks. It's up to you to discover the dark secrets surrounding Danny's life and death and bring justice to those responsible for his death. So there you have it, a rather

(Left) You begin your adventure here in the Transport Pod.

predictable plot in this John Major of adventure games. No, *The Orion Conspiracy* hasn't had an affair with a trapeze artist, nothing as interesting as that – it's GREY. Drab graphics, leaden animation, murky music and droning speech synthesis all add up to colourless gameplay. Which is a shame since this game does have some things going for it.

And what might they be?

I like to end on a high note so I'll get on to that later, first let me justify my criticisms. Okay so I said the graphics were drab – look at the screenshots and see for yourself. Loads of locations there may be, but many of them look identical such as all the corridors and rooms on levels B3 and B5 for example. It's bad enough having to constantly retrace your steps to revisit rooms and characters without having to look at the same dreary scenery every time you do it. To make matters worse every time you exit a screen you have to wait for the image to go black before arriving at the next screen which is more than likely a portion of corridor identical to the one you just left. And if I ever have to see that pathetic spinning CD again (you get to see that each time the program accesses the CD which feels like every other screen), I swear I'll scream.

What about the animation?

It's true there are some mini-animated sequences, but these are few and far between. At times attention to detail can't be faulted – a nice touch is Brookes' swinging earring when she's

(Below left) A control system to be proud of – status allows you to alter everything down to the speed of subtitles. Save your games regularly to avoid the immense tedium of retracing your steps.

(Below) Meet the notorious Brookes or G-Spot as she's affectionately known to the crew.





Tech specs

Memory: 4Mb (8Mb recommended)

Processor: 386D x 33Mhz Double-speed CD-ROM drive

Hard Disk Space: 10Mb

Graphics: VESA compliant SVGA

Sound: Standard

Controls: Mouse, joystick, keyboard

« warming up on the basketball court but the overall animation is lacking. Most of the time the characters are plank-like in the extreme and would be far better off auditioning for an episode of *The Woodentops*. Murky music? Well, the first thing I did when I loaded the game up was switch off the accompanying melody – need I say more? Droning speech synthesis? The actors voices are so stilted they make Roger Moore sound lively. Leonard Cohen fans will love it! The sound effects are pretty realistic though – I especially liked the *Star Trek*-style opening and closing doors.

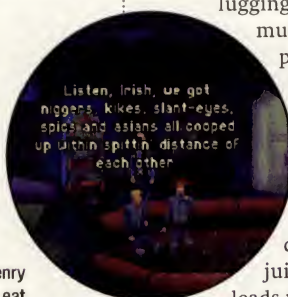
So what has it got going for it...?

Errm, well, there's the sophisticated control system which is a cinch to master. Interaction on screen takes place by employing a simple "point and click" action with the mouse. Descriptive text appears when a character or object can be interacted with, and clicking the right mouse button pops up a selection of actions to perform. This feature actually provides a clue on how to solve the various

(Above left) See what I mean? Those pop-up icons solve the puzzles for you once you've located an object.

(Above centre) Nice turn of phrase has Danny's lover Steven Kauffman.

(Above right) Homophobics, racists and bigots – they're all here at Danny's funeral.



(Right) Henry Kissinger eat your heart out!

(Below) With all this gear in your inventory you can wreak havoc in the fuel room.

(Below right) It appears that Kauffman only had a bit part!

puzzles since it shows you what object you need. No prizes for working out you have to freeze the rat since a fire extinguisher appears with the words "freeze rat" when you select the little rodent, provided you have found the extinguisher of course. Great if you're stuck but irritating if you are already finding the conundrums as easy as shelling peas.

Accessing the inventory is simple too – just move the crosshair off the bottom of the screen to view what you are

lugging about with you – Devlin must have very large pockets. Conversing with the various characters (there are around 20 in all) brings its just rewards though you have to wade through a load of reactionary drivel to worm out every juicy, little titbit. Which leads me neatly on to another

paradox – each time you speak to a character you are given a list of questions to choose from but the questions are repeated over and over again to every person you meet – seriously tedious. Having said that, when a new question appears in the list after performing a particular action, it's a clear indication of what you must do next therefore providing a clue with all the subtlety of a sledgehammer. Great if you're stuck but... you get my drift.

With all the really outstanding adventures on the shelves at the moment like *King's Quest VII*, *LBA* and *Star Trek, The Orion Conspiracy* makes no secret of being just another run-of-the-mill graphic adventure that just doesn't measure up. However, if you should happen buy it, I have to say that Domark's customer support (especially Simon) is tremendously helpful. So it's true that every cloud has a silver lining! **Z**

Score

36

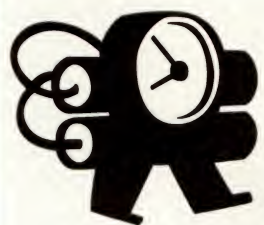
Mediocre graphic adventure which resorts to offensive language and bigoted content to spice it up. Or put another way... It's a goddamn disgrace...

Price: £39.99 **Release Date:** Out Now
Publisher: Domark
Tel: 0181 780 2224



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P508PZ

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**Patrick McCarthy's feeling
jaded. Partly because he
just watched England
play Japan and partly
because he's a miserable
bastard anyway.**

Striker 95

\$TRIKER 95 – SNAPPY NAME FOR AN update, eh? Where do they think of them? In a barn in Somerset, actually. I just checked. Good name, though, because what they're actually saying in the title, right, and this is quite clever, is that it's *Striker* – again, because it was out once before (and it was called *Striker*) – and it's out this year (1995). Cool. But what does it mean to you, the man in the street? (Or woman, in the unlikely event that you're (a) female, and (b) enough into football that you'll plough through this

garbage.) Let's look at the chart.

As you can see from the chart (*What chart? Ed.*) *Striker* and *Striker 95* are almost identical. As you can also see quite plainly on the X-axis (*Where is this chart? Can anyone see a chart? Ed.*) Pamela Anderson is an android with as much charm as a Li-lo, and the Conservative Party in the West Midlands has been registering dead people as Tory voters in marginal constituencies. Now let's look at things in a bit more detail.

Sticky situations

Striker's basic problem is with the ball. It sticks to your player's foot like a plastic chair to a nudist's butt. Nothing short of a nuclear strike (or, in the case of the butt, a dash of Windolene) will dislodge it. And the realisation that every single one of your players is an honorary Ferenc Puskas changes your approach to a match. Everyone, no matter how pure their original intentions to play a clean passing game, ends up charging downfield on lengthy runs, skipping around and back-flipping over tackles with the help of the in-built glue-factor, until the goal looms in sight.

Passing fancies

Even the most stubborn, who try to stick with a passing game, will soon give up, simply because passing is such a pain in the arse. You have to press two buttons at the same time (Yes, mark you, two! I shall write to my MP...) to pass directly to the nearest player, and given the 30-yard slide that would-be tacklers execute, it isn't what you'd call an effective approach. So the game degenerates into taking it in turns at lengthy sprints, followed by shots on goal. Except that as soon as you realise that the goalkeepers are virtually omnipotent, even the shots disappear as players concentrate on running the ball past the goalie.

They also haven't improved the aftertouch. When I say "improved", I mean they haven't made it any more realistic. The ball still moves about like a beach-ball in a wind-tunnel, and can be curved so drastically it can practically loop-the-loop.

A catalogue of woes

What else? Oh yes, video inserts. Take a kick-off or a throw-in, and you can watch film of real footballers doing it and



(Above) The only tactic is to dribble the sticky ball the length of the pitch and bang it at the keeper. You never need to pass, just dodge the tackles and then wait for the rebound to score.

Kit Editor

The kit editor is very limited, in that you can only work with solid shirt colours – so Barcelona (sorry, "Barkalone" – haw haw) play in a solid red shirt, and Juventus ("Youvemetus" – for Christ's sake) play in plain black shirts and white shorts. I know people have been complaining about the trend toward multi-coloured, après-ski style football kits, but this is taking things too far the other way. And I'm sure the original *Striker* allowed stripes. I can't be bothered to check, though.





Tech specs

Memory: 4Mb

Processor: 386DX 33Mhz

Hard Disk Space: 12Mb

Graphics: VGA

Sound: All major, including Gravis and Roland

Controls: Joystick, keyboard, gamepad

everything. You need never go to a football match ever again. Then there's the much-vaunted "greatly enhanced" artificial intelligence of the players. Artificial stupidity, more like. Control switches between players mid-tackle; players sprint away when they should be chasing the ball; they throw the ball straight out of play; and the ball can roll to a stop, completely ignored, in a corner.

Add to this a view that makes it difficult for anyone playing out of the



screen to see where they're going; "different" stadiums with meaningless attendances and player ratings that are ignored by computer players (thrill as your Olympic sprinter of a winger is out-run by a full-back who, to judge from his ratings, should be a quadriplegic) and you have a game that hasn't improved one jot over the original. Oh, hang on a minute. The pitch is better than it was. Take an extra seven marks. **Z**



(Above and left) One of the new features allows you to create a team from scratch, as well as edit the existing teams. Obviously, the chance to call your team something obscene is enough for most people, but this allows you to go one step further and choose a player's face. In other words, by changing the shape of the head, the eyes, the nose and the hair, you can make a team of absolute monsters. I've decided that to get in my team you have to look like Sidney Greenstreet. The fact that it's a complete and utter waste of time, because the players all look the same on the pitch, seems in keeping with the game.

(Left) You can bend the ball quite brilliantly when taking free kicks, corners and goal kicks.

(Far Left) The auto replay feature will let you see where you went wrong time and time again.

Fearless Andy Gray

If I remember my *Commentator's Book of Clichés* correctly, Fearless Andy Gray was renowned for "putting his head where other people wouldn't put their feet" – into verruca-infested changing room showers, for example. And now he's done it again, fearlessly providing bone-headed, scarcely-audible and delayed reaction commentary from a script just one-page long (see picture). Let's face it, he's not the natural choice, is he? Having Andy Gray doing your commentary is like having Robert Maxwell doing your cross-channel swimming.



Score

62

Aptly named, but mostly hairy dog trumpet.

Price: £34.99 **Release Date:** Out now
Publisher: Time Warner
Tel: 01604 602800

Best Computer Football Game in the World (This Week)

The problem with PC football games is that they're on the PC. There's something mysterious about the PC's innermost workings that dictates that any football game that appears on it, after succeeding on other formats, will fail to deliver the goods. It will be a disappointment. So, if you really want a good football game, go elsewhere. The best around at the moment is Konami's *International Superstar Soccer* on the SNES, which is stunning. The players even look like their real-life counterparts – Baggio has a ponytail, Valderrama a huge ginger mop, Gullit has dreads, Gascoigne looks like a penis. It's the best.

(Right) The visual organisational chart lets you rearrange your command structure relatively easily.



The Civil War

The Civil War, Empire's Fields of Glory follow-up, is an awesome looking American Civil War sim. Andrew Wright picks his men and marches to the sound of the guns.

(Below) There's a point and click screen. And let's face it, nobody could miss those buttons.

(Below right) The Presidential campaign map of 1861. Note the initial swing to the Confederates.

A LONG, LONG TIME AGO (WAS IT only two years?) MicroProse released a ground-breaking wargame sim called *Fields of Glory*. This was a wargame sim rather than a war sim in that it didn't really simulate war, it simulated a wargame, complete with a virtual tabletop and animated miniatures. Now the same programming team has completed the follow-up, a similar game based on the American Civil War. And

"The Civil War might have the same engine as Fields of Glory underneath the bonnet but it also has plenty of extras."

for what it's worth, it's now being marketed by Empire.

The *Civil War* might have the same engine as *Fields of Glory* underneath the bonnet but it also has plenty of extras. There's now a campaign game as well as four historical battles of varying sizes, and the ordering system has been completely redesigned from the bottom up. The user interface is a totally different beast and the battlefield can now be zoomed and scrolled much more effectively. All in all, it looks a lot more impressive. And it feels a lot more impressive too.

For your money you get a CD-ROM with different installation options depending on how much of your hard drive you can afford to give up. Whatever you decide, you still need to keep the CD-ROM in your drive while you play, which is such a pain in the arse I can't even begin to express my feelings about it. In fact, I even had to see a my therapist about it, but I know you're not really interested. You don't care about me at all. You just want

to know about the game, you smug, unfeeling bastards.

Anyway, there's a good looking 50-page manual that struggles bravely to guide you through the game, but it jumps around just that bit too much. More impressive is an excellent background book full of snippets of information and some excellent line drawings – well worth a read.

Hardware is a big headache these days. The game is supposed to run on a moderately fast 386 with four megs, but eight megs is recommended and you'll spend a lot of time waiting for the

battlefield to render when you scroll or switch magnification levels. On a fast 486 or a Pentium, though, it runs at a cracking pace.

Culture shock

As I'm writing for an intellectual magazine there should be little need to explain what the American Civil War was. You can choose sides, naturally enough, and opt for one of the four ready-made battle scenarios that range from bloody affairs like Shiloh to unheard of skirmishes which are useful for getting started.

The good news is that you can configure the game to your heart's content. There are nine factors that can be set to one of five levels: resources, supply, unit types, facilities, command and control, fatigue, terrain effects, morale and victory conditions. At the basic level your men respond instantly to orders and will do anything, no matter how suicidal. At the most complicated level, you've got time lag for orders, ammo supply problems, knackered troops and all kinds of problems that will leave you tearing your hair out. Still, war is hell, as Sheridan said. At least I think he said it. You can also have all kinds of troop types from militia and sharpshooters to mounted infantry and rifled field guns, or simply choose infantry, cavalry and





Tech specs

Memory: 4Mb

Processor: 386/33

Hard Disk Space: 2-45Mb

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: All SoundBlasters, ProAudio-Spectrum and Gravis

Controls: Mouse, keyboard

artillery, depending on your inclination.

Orders are given by clicking on the unit flag and selecting an option from the icons on the right, which range from attack to advance – cautious or otherwise – defend, hold, withdraw and run away. A good strategic option that last one. You can get a quick look at the unit's make-up by clicking the right button too. There are also two levels of magnification in the campaign game and five for the battlefield, so you can

watch fights close up or get just the right overall view. This was one of *Field of Glory*'s worst omissions and it's well sorted out in *The Civil War*.

Compared with *Fields of Glory*, the figures are much less detailed and look a lot less like toy soldiers. But the landscape is more detailed and varied, with plenty of trees, hills, buildings, roads and rivers. The combat system makes good use of the terrain features too, so you can gain a lot by studying the lie of the land.

The campaign element is much of a muchness. It's nice to have but it's not that much fun. Inevitably it's the battles that provide the entertainment, and this they do in style. You've got a real-time, visually appealing wargame with a high level of artificial intelligence, and gazillions of configuration options. What more could you want? A hex or two perhaps? Naah – they're for anoraks. This is the real thing. Mount up, boys. **Z**



Hooves and helmets v hexes

The first PC wargames were dull affairs by anyone's standards. Even mine, and I've got 'em all. Everything was hexes and counters, combat odds and tables – everything but the dice, in fact. The first move away from this simulated boardgame style was the Turcan *Battlescape* series like *Borodino* and *Gettysburg*, where units were represented by three dimensional blocks on a simple green landscape.

Then came the first attempts at animated units moving on realistic terrain. Games like *Rorke's Drift* and *The Charge of the Light Brigade* – both from Impressions, funnily enough – brought more laughter than recruits to the wargaming hobby with dreadful, animated figures and a slow, cumbersome control system. Just remembering them makes me cringe.

In the last couple of years things have improved on both sides of the wargames table. Now we've got good, complex, hex-based games like *Panzer General* and the *V for Victory* series and miniature-style games like *Fields of Glory* and Impressions' much improved *The Blue and the Gray*. It's no wonder I'm always late with my copy...



(Above left) You can get as close to the action as you like...

(Left) ...or see something a little more graphical like in *Fields of Glory*.

Score

83

Captures the spirit of tabletop wargaming beautifully.

Price: £44.99 **Release Date:** Out now

Publisher: Empire

Tel: 0181 343 7337



Virtual Golf

The Scottish Open

THE SCOTTISH OPEN DESERVES A mention for being the first golf game that manages to fit the "virtual" tag into its name.

Congratulations, Core. Unfortunately, for a game purporting to be "just like the real thing", the graphics are a complete let-down, and about five years too late. It has a strange, other-worldly feel, with post-nuclear landscapes and no discernible grass. Despite the title, there are four courses to play, only one of which is in Scotland. The majority of the others, like the Scots themselves, are in England.

Healthy options

A reasonable range of options lets you practice, or play, the Scottish Open, a tournament, skins, a shoot-out or a Derby Scramble – nothing to do with Roy MacFarland, it's actually a nobby name for "Four-ball Better Ball" (or whatever it's called).

Good things, bad things...

The courses, despite the fact that they're supposedly from widely different areas of Britain and Ireland, all look exactly the same. The whole thing's a bit of a mixed bag, really – on the up-side; there's a good range of views to watch your shots, and movable cameras so you can see over hills and trees before playing them. And they adjust quickly, too. But on the down-side; there's no user-selectable replay, the putting grid is too large and there's a maddening voice-over by some public-school twerp or other. And the "crowd reactions" are utterly crap, and have clearly been done by two blokes on their own in a studio.

You can make up your own player,

(Above left) Carrying boxes about everywhere he went was tiring Henry out.

(Right) Metal detector at the ready, he scoured the woods for treasure.

choosing horribly-coloured outfits and devising a "profile" of sorts, balancing abilities in driving, chipping and putting (good). But then because the maximum distance for the putter is so small, the caddy chooses a pitching wedge for you on the larger greens (bad).

And there are so many stupid limitations, that it winds you up: you can't save a practice round to play later – you can only play a tournament on two of the courses after you've attained "pro" status with your saved player (and despite what it says in the manual, you can't even practice the pro courses until you do so). And nowhere in the manual does it tell you how you become a pro in the first place. Work it out yourself, lunkhead.

Ball movement

The most important thing is that golf games should, ideally, feel as if you're playing golf. The ball, when hit, should fly through the air, smash through greenhouse windows or bounce off the skulls of passing babies as realistically as possible. When you hit a 250-yard drive, you don't expect the ball to be in the air for about 0.25 of a second, as here. It's weird – as if there's someone



beneath the surface with a giant magnet, and the ball's made of lead.

Alien golf

The sound effects are odd, too. When the ball hits the ground, it sounds hollow and rubbery, as if you're playing on an inflatable golf course. And graphically, the ground itself even looks just that little bit... weird. Other-worldly. The bunkers seem to be made from the same stuff as the fairways – like they're just bits of the fairways that have worn rather thin, and there are huge lights

Score

60

Look! A virtual good score...

Price: £39.99 **Release Date:** Out now

Publisher: Core Design

Tel: 01332 297797

Tech specs

Memory: 4Mb (8Mb recommended)

Processor: 486/33

Hard Disk Space: 2Mb

Graphics: VGA

Sound: Sound Blaster and compatibles

Controls: Mouse



Two golf games; one from another planet and another comprised entirely of still photographs. Oh joy. **Patrick McCarthy** forgets to make the customary "loud trousers" joke in his intro.

Picture Perfect Golf

under the surface which show through more in the thin bits.

So, you're playing golf on an enormous, inflatable golf course: it has a weird, rubbery crust with lights underneath that show through in the thin bits, and there are hugely powerful magnets that exert powerful forces on your ball. This is *Alien Golf*. Which would be quite good if they meant it. You could fly around the galaxy, playing golf under different atmospheric conditions – courses with low gravity and enormous holes, where you could hit the ball 700 yards and need to; courses with heavy gravity, where you can see the hole 30 yards away, but need four shots to get there...

If they'd taken that approach, you'd have to give them marks for originality, at least. After all, there are so many sodding golf games, all trying the same, dead-straight approach, and almost all failing for one reason or another. I remember a Japanese golf game on one of the consoles that had beat 'em up bits and was quite a laugh. It was hardly brilliant, but at least they were trying something different. However, instead of realising that this isn't going to compete on a straight "just like real golf" footing with *PGA* and *Links*, they've tacked on the "Virtual" bollocks and hoped we won't notice. I mean, are these things developed in a vacuum or something? Surely the designers play other games and can see what the most cursory examination of their own game makes clear? Maybe not. Maybe that's how you become a games developer. Whatever the reason, this has some okay bits and some nob bits, and the nob bits win through. **Z**

(Above) Pictures of trees, grass and sky.

(Right) Another picture.

THE SECOND OF OUR TWO GAMES with the theme of "Golf Games That Aren't Quite of This World" will leave you feeling just that little bit odd for a different reason. *Picture Perfect Golf* must be the first golf game not to feature a picture of a little man in badly-co-ordinated sportswear playing your shots. Instead, all you see is a static, and not especially good quality, photograph of the hole ahead of you. I suppose it counts as first-person perspective – perhaps they were trying to capture the *Doom* vote.

It's very weird. They haven't bothered to do the thing properly, and have used a view that looks down at your feet and the ball while you play the shot, then looks up to watch the ball sail off into the under-growth. At least they could have included a special shoe-designer section, where you could choose a colour combination to have on your brogues. Come to think of it, a material-designer for your trouser patterns wouldn't go amiss, either. But no...

Options galore

Instead, you get nothing. Virtually nothing, anyway. You get one course (Harbour Town, as seen in *Links 386 Pro*), and one way to play. And that's it.

Tech specs

Memory: 4Mb
Processor: 386/33
Hard Disk Space: 5Mb
Graphics: SVGA
Sound: SoundBlaster
Controls: Mouse



It really is one of the sorriest golf games I've seen. You play a shot. A ball waves about on screen, with no sense of 3D, and disappears. You wait, the next photo is displayed. You play another shot. The aiming range is very narrow – you can't hit the ball anywhere they haven't photographed. The sound effects are laughable; the ball hits the ground like someone head-butting a microphone, and the "wind noises" sound like a bison with asthma. In short, you can have more fun running a cheese-grater over your fingernails. **Z**

Score

30

It's perfectly dire.

Price: £44.99 **Release Date:** Out now
Publisher: Empire
Tel: 0181 343 7337

(Right) You've reached Argentina, but that's no reason to start blubbing.



Take your H.P. Lovecraft novel (courtesy of Amaya Lopez), slowly add a dash of Nazis, from Infogrames, a pinch of ice monsters, available from Infogrames, and garnish with pert buttocks from your local Infogrames. Simmer gently for several days and enjoy. Yet another winning combination from Sainsbu... er,... Infogrames.

Prisoner of Ice

DESPITE SOUNDING OTHERWISE, Infogrames' new graphic adventure isn't about that festering piece of cambozola which surfaced last time you defrosted the fridge. It's based on a novel, and even the most unperceptive adventurer should by now have caught on to the company's romance with the works of H.P. Lovecraft. Some might have thought it done for, H.P. and his battered novels thrown out on their proverbial ears, as *Alone in the Dark 3* rose to the heady heights of fame without the merest mention of the word Cthulhu. And they'd be wrong. For the torrid love affair has been bubbling away on the back burner as *Prisoner of Ice* is the second game in the *Calls of Cthulhu* series (following on from *Shadow of the Comet*) and takes its inspiration from Lovey's *The Mountains of Madness* novel. But far more intriguing is the fact that the game's scenario is based on real-life events, namely the fact that in 1935 the Nazis created the Ahnenbe – a secret team of scientists whose task was to investigate spook occult practices.

Yet Nazis and black magic are nothing new, both were melded before in LucasArts' excellent *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*, which appeared three years ago now, and *Prisoner of Ice*

draws heavily from this title. But let's keep an open mind and remember that "borrowing" is no bad thing as long as the end result is a gripping game.

Bjorn again

So back to the plot. The year is 1937. The place – The South Pole. Top Norwegian explorer Peter Hamsun and his son, Bjorn, have escaped from a secret Nazi military base, along with a Royal Navy Commando O'Leary. Not only have they prised themselves out of a high security, Colditz-type establishment but they've also managed to squeeze out three enormous crates, marked top secret. All's well as the trio merrily tow the crates on a dog sled until one slides off and splits open. Out pops a hideous mouldy looking monster (not unlike that piece of cambozola) which proceeds to drag O'Leary into the ice. He, in turn, resurfaces a crazed man, and this time takes Peter with him leaving Bjorn to hoof it to safety. As fortune would have it, Bjorn meets up with some British soldiers and hauls himself and his two remaining crates aboard their submarine. It's here that the game proper begins with the crew of the sub being introduced to an independent observer, American agent Ryan, who spookily also happens to be you.

Tech specs

Memory: VGA 4Mb RAM/SVGA 8Mb RAM

Processor: 486 DX33

Hard Disk Space: 1Mb

Graphics: VGA/SVGA

Sound: SoundBlaster & 100% Compatibles

Controls: Mouse

And from then on it's a question of pointing and clicking to your heart's content, whether it's to talk to other characters, look at your surroundings, pick up and use objects and all the other adventure-type things that come into play. The interface has been well thought out, and is very simple to use. The right mouse button investigates objects and your surroundings, while the left mouse button automatically recognises what you want it to do. For example, if you want to talk to another character, you just click on whoever takes your fancy, while if you'd rather give him or her an item, you merely drag the mouse to your hidden inventory at the top of the screen, which will then appear, click on the item and drag it over to the person you want to give it to. No frenzied cycling through a series

(Right) The Prisoner partys on with a Nazi and a spook tribesman.

(Middle) Molten lava and rock – this must be the way to Pompeii.

(Far right) A fiendish puzzle – getting Ryan out of the cell isn't as easy as it looks.





of word or icon commands, missing the one you want to highlight and then having to run through them all again.

Squawkie talkie

As this is a talkie CD-ROM, you can opt to play the game with the on-screen text switched off. If, like me, your concentration span resembles that of a gold fish, it's a good idea to leave the text on, so that you don't miss any vital clues. On the other hand, if you can't bear to listen to the speech, you can also turn it off, and go for the sad Hobbit-obsessed adventurer mode of play. Which bring us nicely onto the digitised speech itself. This has been well implemented, with each character having a voice befitting his or her personality, although as per usual the hero has an annoyingly smug American accent. The sound effects too, are first class and are complemented by a suitably atmospheric soundtrack ranging from Wagnerian themes to eerie sci-fi type music, *not* composed by John Williams. As for the dialogue, this is pleasant enough but fails to make headway in the humour stakes, and never really raises a belly laugh like the LucasArt adventures. On occasion, there are some odd-sounding lines, which point to the fact that they've been sloppily

translated from the French, but then this is only a minor gripe.

However, it's graphically that the game really comes into its own. *Prisoner of Ice* looks absolutely superb with its stunning animation and impressive cinematic cut-scenes, particularly if you're lucky enough to play the SVGA version over the VGA – both are included on the CD. The animation of the characters was developed using a 3D technique called Motion Picture, where real actors' movements were filmed for maximum realism – watch Diane swivel her hips out of her cell, or Ryan's tight buns swagger across the screen, and you'll see just what I mean.

Two's company

The game's also pretty big, with six main locations and over 150 different settings: the South Pole nazi base, inside the submarine, the Falkland Islands, Argentina, Tihuanaco and that little town of Illsmouth in New England, which will be familiar to *Shadow of the Comet* fans. Fortunately, there's ample room for saving loads of games, and even an automatic save mode which performs the double function of alerting you to the fact that you're just about to meet your maker. There are also two different endings to

the game – at a certain point towards the end, the game branches into two separate directions and you can opt for a realistic tragic finale or a phoney Hollywood conclusion. Puzzle-wise, it's easy to get into and yet every now and then stumps you for a while, but never long enough to make you want to trash your PC (a frequent occurrence with adventure games). One bugbear, however, is that the level of artificial intelligence could do with a bit of tweaking – sometimes Ryan returns to a specific place and the game won't recognise the fact that he's already been there, seen it, done it.

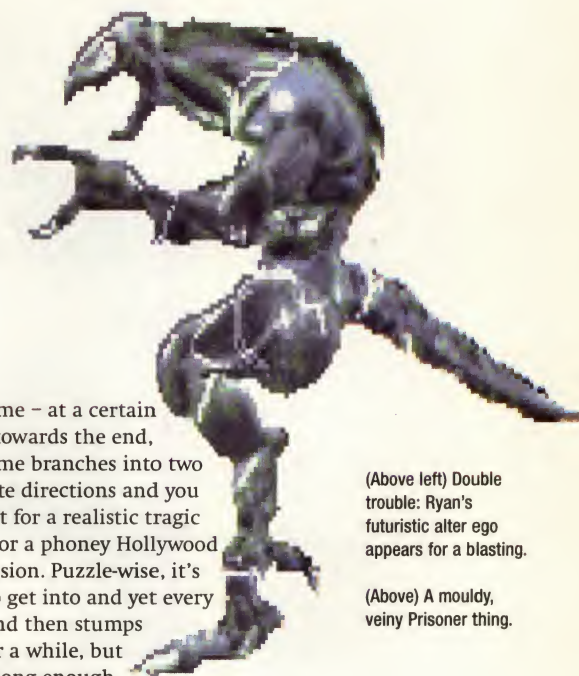
Oh, and a different set of animations for the death by cheese monster sequences would have been nice, too. But then I'm picky like that. Though I'd be lying if I said I didn't enjoy *Prisoner of Ice*. It may not be original, and although graphically superior to *Indiana Jones*, doesn't make for quite as charming or witty company. And yet, it has that warm, familiar, feel to it, rather like an old friend, which definitely makes it well worth a visit. **Z**

Score

88

Quality graphic adventure – watch out LucasArts, the French are coming.

Price: £44.99 Release Date: Out Now
Publisher: Infogrames Tel: 0171 738 8199



(Above left) Double trouble: Ryan's futuristic alter ego appears for a blasting.

(Above) A mouldy, veiny Prisoner thing.



Creative Labs launches a mouse replacement that has you waving your arms about. Dave Mathieson checks it out.

Aeropoint Aeroduet

ONE OF THE NICEST THINGS ABOUT computers these days is the almost universal use of mice, which makes most programs a hell of a lot easier to use. While the odd saddy refuses to embrace our little plastic friends, preferring instead to memorise four hundred keystrokes, to most people using them quickly becomes second nature.

Because they're so easy to use, however, attempts are constantly being made to better the trusty mouse, and anyone who can do this stands to make huge amounts of cash. The most common mouse substitutes are the trackball and pen systems. The advantage of trackballs is that they don't take up much space, making them ideal for notebooks, while pen-type devices are good for arty types who learned to draw using pencils.

Flying mice

The Aeropoint system from Creative Labs uses a radically different approach from other systems in that it uses the third dimension as well. The system consists of a receiver that sits on your desk and either a mouse-type thing or a pen. These differ from their standard, boring, 2D counterparts in that they're both cordless, as the receiver detects their position. The receiver also gauges the height above the desktop, giving full 3D motion.

The 3D-ness of the system can be used in various ways, and there's a Windows program that lets you pick one of three operating modes for the mouse, or two for the pen (this difference will be explained later). The most familiar mode is 2D Horizontal, which ignores the z-axis (that's up and down to you



and me), where you move the mouse in the same way as you would a conventional mouse. But the way it differs is that the mouse doesn't actually touch the mat, which is pretty spooky at first. The mouse has the normal left and right buttons, while the pen has to be tapped against the mat for left-click (it has a button for right-clicking).

The second mode, 2D Vertical, is jolly weird indeed. You move the mouse left and right for (you guessed it) left and right movement. To move the pointer up and down the screen, however, you move the mouse vertically, which takes some getting used to. This mode doesn't work with the pen as there's nothing there to tap it against.

The final mode uses all three dimensions to maximum effect, although the way that this motion relates to what's on screen depends on the software that you're using. To demonstrate the system's capabilities there's a demo 3D shoot 'em up, which, while it adequately demonstrates Aeropoint's

capabilities, won't keep you up all night. There are also a couple of decent graphics packages included that are more suited to the pen.

Overall, the Aeropoint works pretty well, and, if you fancy a bit of a change from your mouse, you might consider it worth a look. However, to use it as a simple mouse substitute is wasting

much of its potential, and using the 3D mode to control games like *Descent* would be deeply groovy. The problem is, of course, that developers need to build support for the

Aeropoint into their games. The fact that it's made by Creative Labs, though, should give them a bit of an incentive, as Aeropoint has the potential to bring true 3D gaming to the masses. **Z**

Score

75

Original but weird, and packed with plenty of potential.

Price: £99 ex VAT

Manufacturer: Creative Labs

Tel: 01734 344322

EVERYONE'S GOING DIGITAL-bonkers these days, and all but the most devout vinyl-junkies have been happily using CDs to play music for years. The amount of digital information needed to store an album's worth of music easily fits on a single CD, which, as CD-ROM owners know, can hold about 700Mb of data. Video is a completely different kettle of hot water, however. (I don't keep fish in my kettle, and neither do any of my friends, so there.)

The problem with pictures is that they take up loads of space, and to achieve video playback, you need to play back these pictures at 25 frames per second. A single frame at TV resolution in true colour takes up about 1Mb (Copyright 1995, Very Rough Estimates Ltd), which means that you need 25Mb of storage for every second of video. Multiply this by the number of seconds in two hours (7,200) and you need 180 gigabytes (1,000Mb) of storage for a typical feature film, which is plain bloody silly.

Squeezing the length

As you've probably guessed by now, the ACE MovieMaster isn't a ninja gadget that multiplies the capacity of your CD-ROM drive by a couple of hundred. It employs some kind of trickery instead. To squeeze video into manageable amounts, the MovieMaster uses a compression technique called MPEG (Motion Picture Expert Group). MPEG works on the principle that most of the information on the screen doesn't change between frames. If you have any doubts, watch some crappy cartoons the next time you happen to be up on a

Saturday morning and try and spot some movement other than the lips of the character who's currently talking. If you can't be arsed to get up on Saturdays, you'll have to take my word for it. Anyway, using MPEG, it's possible to squeeze a full length film on to a couple of CDs.

At this point you're probably wondering if this seemingly awesome compression ratio has some kind of catch associated with it. Well, you know those Action/Adventure tapes down your video shop which have been rented out about 2,000 times and you only get out when you've seen all the decent ones? That's MPEG that is. There's a tendency for the pictures to appear slightly blocky, and although it's not half as bad as the alleged "full motion video" clips in most games, there is a noticeable loss of detail. The picture quality depends a great deal on the way that the film was originally encoded, and as these techniques are constantly improving, things are looking up.

The Ace MovieMaster Classic is a standard 16-bit ISA card. It comes in three versions: the VGA (the one on test here), the TV and the Combo. The VGA

version enables you to connect the card to your monitor, while the TV version has a connector for your humble old telly. The aptly-named Combo model has both.

Sample Included

Getting the thing up and running is a simple matter of plugging it in and running an installation program. There's a sample MPEG file on another disk that lets you test the card, although there's no point in doing this as the MovieMaster comes bundled with 16 VideoCD titles (there's a couple of other bundles available as well), including *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Tiger Claws* featuring the ninjastastic Cynthia Rothrock. Playing them back can be done either from the DOS command line or using a Windows program. Unlike the Miro Video 12PD reviewed in last month's *PC Zone*, the MovieMaster uses hardware MPEG playback, so it doesn't need a fast PC. You will need a CD-ROM drive that is VideoCD compatible, but as most are, this shouldn't be a problem.

The current range of titles available on VideoCD is limited, but there are new releases all the time. And if you're the kind of person who's never sure whether to sit around in front of the telly or play on your PC, the Ace MovieMaster will let you kill two birds with one card. **Z**

Buy yourself loads of VideoCDs and get an MPEG card thrown in for free. Too good to be true? Dave Mathieson finds out.

ACE MovieMaster Classic

Score

78

A more than adequate video card that comes with some cool videos.

Price: £299 ex VAT
Manufacturer: CD Vision
Tel: 0171 240 7764

GROUP
TEST

A Game

We locked Tim Ponting away with eight video cards to test. And the winner is...

MANY YEARS AGO IN THE FLIGHT simulator forum on CompuServe (GO FSFORUM for the sad jocks out there like me) there was a debate raging about video card performance. What was the card that produced the best frame rates in *Falcon 3*? Or was it down to the CPU alone? What difference did the new VESA Local Bus motherboards make? And just how did you remove the flaccid, light brown

protuberance from your forehead when talking about such matters?

The best thing that came out of the debate (apart from proof that gamers are a sad bunch of toolheads) was bursting the Video Accelerator bubble. Such expensive beasts were being supplied as standard in PCs bought by gamers: but far from being fast cards under DOS, they turned out to be as slow as a hare with no legs. The first S3 chips made

Windows run faster than an Ex-Lax QA Tester's bowels,

but were sluggish under DOS compared with their cheapo cousins, the Trident 8900 and Tseng Labs ET4000 chips.

While putting together the "Need For Speed" feature last issue, it became clear that putting video card types on the speed tree was astoundingly simple if you were talking Windows performance, but for DOS games no one really knew what cut the mustard. Even the total propeller jockeys who live in the fabled Dennis Publishing labs whose fingers have developed Philips-head screwdriver tips hadn't got a clue about what cards made games run fast.

So in time-honoured PC Zone fashion we put our heads together and made it all up. Sorry, scratch that, we took the fastest machine we could lay our hands on - the steaming, pulsating, throbbing, turgid, God-I'm-Coming IPC ValueMagic Pentium 120 - and tried every PCI graphics card we could beg off the "proper" (=nerdstastic) computer magazines. And this is what we discovered... Oh, and we threw in an ancient no-brand ISA graphics card with a Tseng Labs ET4000AX chipset just to see what crap results looked like...

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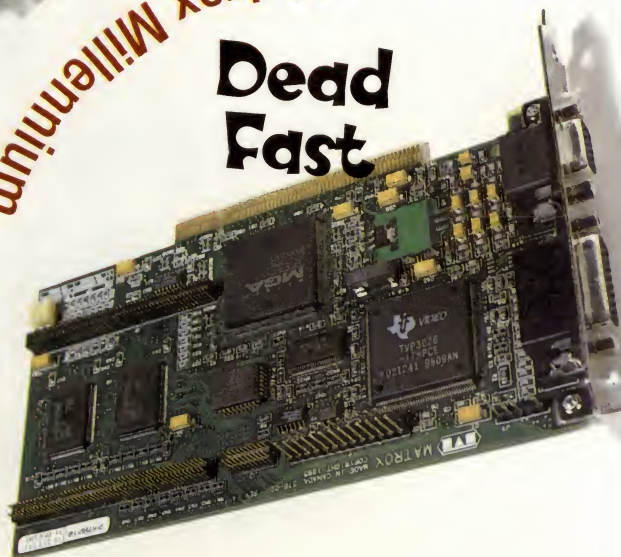
Reading this feature will probably make you argue about *Doom* benchmarks down the pub. That will probably lead to loss of sexual appetite and the growth of extra members from your forehead.



VideoLogic GrafixStar 700

VideoLogic GrafixStar 500

Matrox Millennium

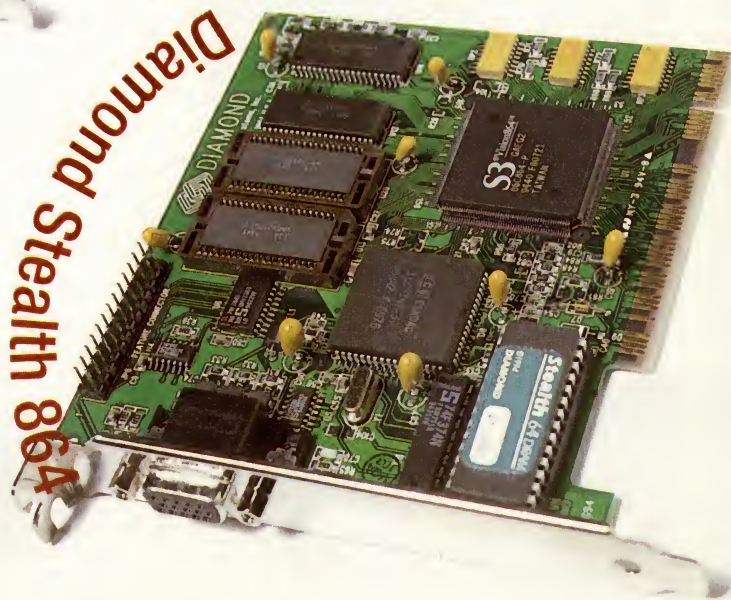
Dead
Fast

Of Cards

As you can see from the charts on the next page, it's bloody confusing. Some cards do well at *Doom* but worse at *Under A Killing Moon*, and so on.

For our money, the *Doom* test is pretty good, though it's a measure of VGA performance rather than SVGA. The Matrox Millennium was a clear winner here – as it was in just about every test, really – benchmarking at a truly staggering 53.51 frames per second. This is known on CIX by Brits as “shit-off-a-shovel”, by Yanks on CompuServe as “very fast”. Remember, the high frames rates are mainly down to the 120MHz Pentium; stick this card in a slower machine and you'll see a benefit, but not much more than a few frames per second at most.

The most important factor determining how fast graphics cards will run is the BUS speed. PCI is the fastest, a smidge faster than VLB, followed miles behind by ISA and the rest. Any PCI BUS card is going to be faster than any ISA card.



Testes, Testes, one two three

At the heart of the testing was the *Doom* benchmark. Run *Doom 2* with the following command line:

`DOOM2 -TIMEDEMO DEMO1`

Don't touch the machine and let it run. When it quits, it will show the message:

X no of gametics in Y realtics

Perform the following sum:

X divided by Y multiplied by 35

This gives the number of frames per second *Doom* runs at. It should work for *Doom* and *Heretic* too. The results shown are with a completely clean boot, full screen but with status bar on.

Another test used was the Video Speed reported in the installation program of *Under A Killing Moon*. This is a fairly “academic” result, but gives some indication of comparative video card speeds under DOS.

The last two benchmarks used were DOS graphics performance tests: one as supplied with the latest version of Universal VESA BIOS Extensions from SciTech Software (version 5.1), which we used to test performance running at 640 by 480 in 256 colours – the commonest SVGA games mode – and the other a cobbled together set of DOS graphics tests ripped from the Dennis computer labs. These are comparative only, so we decided to state the units as Zone Graphics, zogs for short. Blimey.

The Charts

This is so, so, sad. Tim Ponting, you sad, sad man. If you too want to join the ranks of saddoes, read the Testes box to find out what it's all about.

Chipset	Bus	Memory/Type	Street Price (ex VAT)	Doom 2	Under A Killing Moon	UVBE Profile, Mode 101, Lines	UVBE Profile, Mode 101, Clears	UVBE Profile, Mode 101, bithits	DOS Graphics
Videologic GrafixStar 700	PCI/MLB	2Mb VRAM	£235	49.85 fps	18.310 K/s	7.472 lines/s	61.61 clears/s	61.38 bithits/s	11.42 zogs
Videologic GrafixStar 500	PCI/MLB	2Mb EDO DRAM	£185	50.93 fps	15.805 K/s	7.458 lines/s	53.15 clears/s	52.98 bithits/s	11.39 zogs
Matrox Millennium	PCI	2Mb WRAM	£255	53.51 fps	55.154 K/s	8.691 lines/s	230.26 clears/s	166.94 bithits/s	16.88 zogs
Number Nine 9FX Vision 330	PCI/MLB	2Mb DRAM	£144	52.97 fps	21.458 K/s	7.780 lines/s	72.41 clears/s	72.10 bithits/s	10.76 zogs
STB Velocity 64	PCI/MLB	4Mb VRAM	£394	49.93 fps	18.257 K/s	7.623 lines/s	61.50 clears/s	61.31 bithits/s	11.30 zogs
Diamond Stealth	PCI/MLB	2Mb DRAM	£129	52.87 fps	16.228 K/s	7.432 lines/s	54.65 clears/s	54.47 bithits/s	11.44 zogs
Diamond Stealth	PCI/MLB	1Mb DRAM	£135	52.38 fps	11.079 K/s	7.410 lines/s	37.29 clears/s	37.22 bithits/s	11.82 zogs
STB Lightspeed	PCI/MLB	2 Mb DRAM	£144	52.84 fps	22.803 K/s	5.627 lines/s	76.12 clears/s	75.80 bithits/s	24.32 zogs
ET4000 ISA	ISA	1 Mb DRAM	25p (approx)	23.40 fps	4.331 K/s	3.593 lines/s	14.49 clears/s	14.47 bithits/s	8.97 zogs



Diamond Stealth Trio64

Beyond that, small differences may occur depending on the chipsets; but as you can see, when it comes to performance, more dosh doesn't always mean more speed.

Take the STB Velocity 64 card. It cost a ton because of the 4Mb dual-ported VRAM on board, but that doesn't have much of an effect on the performance of games running under dos. Similarly, the current range of s3 chipsets are designed as Windows accelerators, and the cheapest one is the fastest under dos. In order of cost, the current s3 range runs from Trio64 through Vision868 to Vision968. The Trio64 gives the best results; the 868 and 968 battle it out depending on which benchmark you look at.

On the svga front, check out the UVBE and Under A Killing Moon results. These scores reflect performance while running in VESA Mode 101: 640x480 by 256 colours, the standard svga game resolution. Cards with 2Mb RAM seem to come into their own here,

judging by the poor result showed by the Diamond Stealth card we tested which carried only 1Mb, despite its speed in the vga Doom 2 test. The Matrox burned here, though the Number Nine card performed well too.

The type of RAM on the card makes a difference, variations in chipset notwithstanding.

Dual-ported memory is faster than normal RAM; VRAM is faster than DRAM; and EDO DRAM and WRAM are faster than normal DRAM.

So who are the winners in our test? If you have the money, it's worth going for the Matrox Millennium, a Star Buy if ever there was one. Watch out for its predecessor though - the Impression card was a heap of cack running under dos. For those of you with a tighter wallet, a hearty recommendation goes for the Number Nine 9FX Vision 330 card. It's a fast all-rounder (bar the zog test, which is primarily a vga benchmark) and it's bloomin' cheap. It's also nifty under Windows too. However, if Windows doesn't even enter the equation for you, the good old ET4000 W32P chipset on the STB Lightspeed card gives excellent dos performance - check out the zog rating in our chart - at the same price, so that too earns itself a Best Buy. But to be honest, if you go for any 2Mb PCI graphics card with the latest generation of video chipsets, you won't go far wrong. **Z**

ET4000 ISA

Dead Slow





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Sony SRS-PC50 Speakers

Multimedia systems need decent speakers and invariably aren't supplied with any. Duncan Swain looks at the latest from Sony.

THE MAJORITY OF PCS CHURNED OUT by manufacturers these days are multimedia systems. As such, they all have to include a CD-ROM drive, sound card and speakers. Of these three components you will always find that it is the speakers that are skimmed on. You may get a quad-speed CD-ROM drive and a wavetable sound card with your PC, but on the speaker front you are almost guaranteed to end up with a pair that produces sound like those plastic transistor radios with an equally attractive plastic wrist strap you had when you were seven.

If you want to hear the decent sounds that your expensive sound card is capable of producing, you're going to have to invest in a set of speakers that are up to the task. Sony's SRS-PC50 Active Computer Speakers certainly were up to the tasks we put them through, more commonly known as the *Doom*, *Descent* and The Dave Mathieson Collection of Dodgy Disco CD tests.

First, we'll take a look at the aesthetics of the speakers themselves. Rather unimaginatively, Sony has opted to make the

speakers from the same colour of plastic as most PCs – a horribly drab, buff, beige, murky, off-white sort of colour. Maybe Sony thinks this is the sort of colour people want. But something sleek and slinky in matt black or even a vibrant canary yellow would be preferable, and would at least show a spark of originality.

The left speaker has a power button, a volume dial (so you won't have to fiddle around behind your PC looking for the elusive volume control found on many sound cards) and a bass dial, as well as a speaker jack and a second input jack, while the right speaker is button free. The speakers stand about seven inches high and six inches deep, so they don't take up too much room. And if desk space is a problem a pair of mounting brackets is provided that attach the speakers to the side of your monitor, hanging them like a pair of saddle bags and leaving more room for that fungus-infested coffee cup and overflowing ashtray. Make sure you have the right shaped monitor with a square bezel surrounding the screen, because the

brackets weren't designed for curvy monitors and can't be attached properly if you have one. Bear in mind that the separate power supply needs to be plugged in, too, so you'll need another spare power point nearby.

The built-in amplifiers only produce 5W, but this is more than enough for the average desktop PC, whether it's in the office or your bedroom, and is certainly more than enough when you're sitting right in front of the PC. If you're looking for something louder to play your music on you'll have to go out and buy a hi-fi system. The speakers are also magnetically shielded – a necessary precaution to prevent interference from, well, interfering I suppose.

The games we tried, *Doom* and *Descent*, both scored highly on the quality of both music and sound effects. Chain guns rattled away, rocket launchers thwumped nicely, and *Descent*'s plasma cannon sounded suitably chunky. A whole stack of CDs ranging from early Sister Sledge to the Ministry of Sound's Party Trax for the Up and Coming Disco Diva all caused no problems for Sony's PC50s and a good time was had by all in the process.

Overall these speakers are good value for money, if a little drab in appearance, and well worth investing in if you want the realistic sound effects and thumping music you know your system is capable of giving you. **Z**



Score

70

Good value for money but ultimately a bit drab and boring.

Price: £69.99 ex VAT
Manufacturer: Sony
Tel: 0181 760 0500

Evolution P90 Dynamite

AS GAMES GET MORE PROCESSOR-intensive it is becoming more important for us to keep track of some of the best new systems that are aimed specifically at games players. In the past couple of months we have taken a look at the different aspects that affect PC performance, and we can now start to take a look at individual machines.

The Evolution that we've had in is not exactly the cheapest P90 you'll ever find, but as far as specs go, it's very well equipped. It has the new Plato motherboard, which is decidedly nippy, along with one of the most splendid graphics cards around, the Hercules ET4000 PCI. Add to this a jolly nice quad-speed CD-ROM drive and more than enough memory for even the most power-hungry game and you have a distinctly minty box.

As we've said before there are certain games that can be used to judge one of these brute-force boxes. *Wing Commander 3*, *Magic Carpet* in SVGA and *NASCAR* in SVGA are all power hungry games, and it has to be said that the Dynamite manages remarkably well. *Magic Carpet* especially seems to run very smoothly. It's not exactly lightning quick, but at least it's playable - and that's more than most machines can handle.

On the whole it has to be said that this is one of the nicest machines that we've seen recently. It's fast and well equipped, and if you call Evolution you stand a pretty good chance of it being able to build you a system that will fit in with your budget. As games technology gains momentum, now is the time to start looking for a more powerful system. **Z**

Score

92

An excellent system that can be customised to fit your price.

Price: With 17" IDEK Monitor and 16Mb of RAM: £2,460
Manufacturer: Evolution
Tel: 0181 944 6222



This is the first in a new regular series of reviews which will outline some of the best off-the-shelf PCs that you can get your hands on. John Davison takes a look at the rather fabulous Evolution machine.

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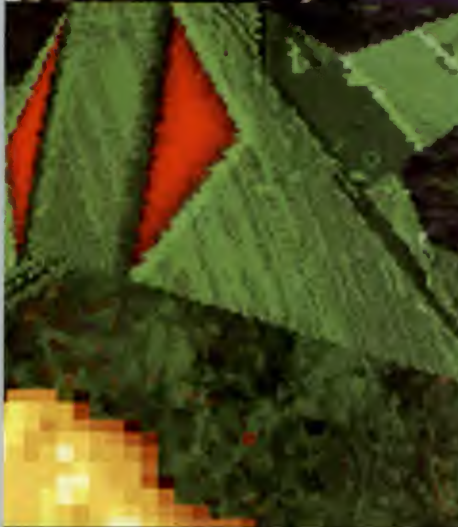
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YES, IT IS TRUE. The HackMasters™ are disbanding. After two years of interminable grievous bodily harm to the precious codes of a million games programmers, the HackMasters™ have split, divided, divorced, gone their separate ways. Call it creative differences. No, better still, with a candour faithful to the HackMaster™ theme, call it "they just don't get on anymore". Like The Police, The Beatles, The Who, The Jam, and Bros, bands of pioneers like The HackMasters™ have a shelf-life, and beyond that shelf-life it would be illegal to be available any longer. They may reform. Never say never. And all that. Until then... anon. Happy hacking.

Trainers

From now on, the mantle of the HackMasters™ will be taken over by coverdisk trainers. Debug is on its way out. Windows95 is to DOS what Hitler was to Poland or Pontius Pilot was to Jesus H. Christ. Trainers are the future.

"What are trainers – we hear you ask?" Well, trainers are basically

custom-designed TSRs, which run behind a given game (let's say, *Descent*) and either (a) constantly plump up your energy and ammo or (b) give you a special range of hot keys to press during the game when you want your energy and ammo plumped up. The one big advantage with trainers is that they don't actually modify any bits of your game. There's no need to back up files; no need to get any hex numbers exactly right; and there's no need to use debug ever again. "Hurrah!" we hear you all chorus. You just run the trainer and that's it. And thanks to those lovely lads at the Gates Of The Underworld BBS, we're able to offer you a veritable feast of trainers to pore over this month. For more information, turn to this month's disk pages.

TERMINAL VELOCITY (Apogee)

Another day. Another *Doom* derivative. A pretty tenuous link admittedly but we, the outgoing HackMasters™, somehow muse that if *Doom* hadn't come out with all its network game trappings and cultish cheat modes, releases like *Magic Carpet* and *Terminal Velocity* wouldn't be quite the same. Anyhow, here's a list of the in-built cheat modes available for Apogee's latest thing. Just type the following words during the game:

TRIGODS	Invincible
TRISHLD	Shield
TRINEXT	Warp to next level
TRIHOUR	Hover Pod
MANIACS	AfterBurner
TRSCOPE	Oscilloscope
TRIBURN	Terminal Velocity
TRFRAME	Frame Counter
3DREALM	Smoking
TRIFIR1	PAC
TRIFIR2	ION
TRIFIR3	RTL
TRIFIR4	MAM
TRIFIR5	SAD
TRIFIR6	SWT
TRIFIR7	Unknown
TRIFIR8	Afterburner
TRIFIR9	Invisible
TIRIFIRO	Invincible

(Below) At last! The trainers from last month, plus a natty Terminal Velocity cheat.





(Left) See that bloke in the shades and stubble? That's you that is. See that thing he's holding? That's what he uses to comb his quiff and part the hair on his chest.



SPOILED

Full Throttle

It seems that everyone and his barber has been playing *Full Throttle*, and everyone and their aforesaid coiffeur has completed it. To wit, complete solutions from Adrian Bortea, Mark Lloyd, Paul White and Mr Jake Ward. But the one that clinched it, the one that stood head and shoulders above the other solves, was **Mark Dennison's**, written – scribed, if we may – in the style of *Full Throttle* "narrative".



The Path To Corley Motors

Today I'm resting after taking a dangerous trip down Highway 9 and finally slaying Ripburger for good. It wasn't all plain sailing, though. First I had to bash my way out of a trash container before kicking down the door of the nearby Kickstand bar. After pulling down the barman's face, I got my keys and rode off on my bike to try to hold up Ripburger and his gang.

I punched a man off his bike before losing a wheel while riding, and woke up in a girl's bedroom – Maurine was

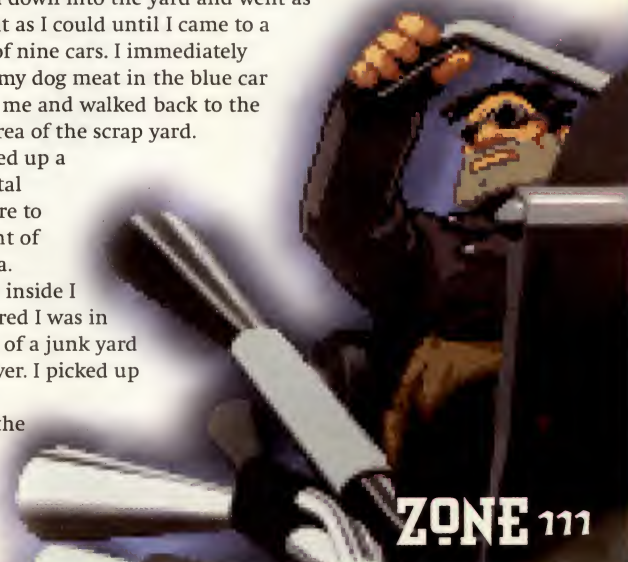
her name. Once up, I picked up a gas can and a nearby hose from the wall.

The town was small and, once outside, I thought my travel problems were over, but the person outside had no access to a car (well, so I thought) and I had to find the parts for my bike myself. Firstly, I visited Todd's house to the west of the town and banged on the door to get attention. He didn't let me in. Too bad. I kicked his

door down and knocked him out. Once inside I opened a cabinet above his head and took out a lock pick. In the refrigerator at the back of the room I found some meat, which I also took. After stepping on to a pink platform in the north east of the room, I was transported underground. I found a blow torch and took it back to Maurine. But I still had work to do, so I visited the old gas tower to the north of the town. I opened the lock on the door of the fence by inserting the lock pick. I picked the lock up for future use. Once inside the tower I attempted to climb the ladder but a 'copter came and chased me out. So I tried again, but instead of

climbing I hid behind a large object in the background of the tower. After the 'copter landed I attached my gas can and hose to the machine. After sucking on the pipe, petrol flowed into my can – I took it back to Mo's. I had nearly repaired my bike, but still needed the front forks and so I headed to Todd's scrap yard to the north of the town. I used the lock on the door of the yard to prevent it from opening when I pulled on the chain. When on top of the wall, I jumped down into the yard and went as far right as I could until I came to a group of nine cars. I immediately placed my dog meat in the blue car next to me and walked back to the main area of the scrap yard. I climbed up a tall metal structure to the right of the area.

Once inside I discovered I was in control of a junk yard car mover. I picked up the car where the



dog was eating by pressing the red button and moving the magnet down with the lever on the left. I moved the magnet higher to stop the dog getting out. I returned to the main area and picked up the forks from the scrap pile before returning to Mo. My bike was soon fixed. I rode off to the east of the town, only to find a roadblock by the same 'copters that found me on the gas tower. So I decided to distract them by returning to the gas tower and touching the ladder again. I jumped back on my bike and I was through.

After meeting with other members of the Polecats, I went back to Mo's house, only to find it had been raided. So I searched through the debris and found the photo of Mo with her uncle Pete. This reminded me that Mo had said her place of hideaway was somewhere along Highway 9. So I sped off via the north route out of the town. I arrived back at the Kickstand bar and found exactly what I was looking for: a means of getting through the roadblock, a truck. I heard cries of help coming from behind the building, and I found the photographer who saved my life. She gave me a fake ID – this gave me a way of busting through the blockade. Inside the bar I asked the driver of the cab if he would go down Highway 9 with me. I gave him my ID card and he agreed.

Passing The Gorge

I was dropped off at Uncle Pete's place, but my bike had been tampered with – I needed a fuel pipe. Inside the house to the right of the estate, I found a piece of iron under a pillow, which enabled me to open a chest at the bottom of the bed. Inside I found a suitable part for

(Right) Mo is one cool chick. Not only does she laugh at your jokes, but she even fixes your bike for free if you manage to find her welding gear.

(Far right) "If you kill me, 008 replaces me!" Whoops, wrong hero.

SPOILED



my bike. Maurice, however, left just ahead of me. After a quick confrontation with the Cavefish, I arrived at the scene of a crash. Using my iron bar, I unscrewed each wheel from the trailer and pushed it over. I set off to the north, back to Pete's place, but was quickly turned around by some of Ripburger's men. They followed me and crashed into the trailer. I soon arrived at the gorge, but left to the west of the scene on my bike and turned off at Mine Road. (Move to the corresponding side of the road when the Mine Road sign appears and press the left mouse button.) After meeting with an old friend of mine, Father Torque, I was told that the Cavefish wear goggles to help them see. I

later found myself in confrontation with a number of people:

Fat man on wide-wheeled bike with no weapon – I punched his lights out.

Fat man on wide-wheeled bike using spiked chain as weapon – I hit him with my iron bar and he fell.

Fat man on wide-wheeled bike using log as weapon – I used a combination of tactics but finally got him with a rapid succession of punches. I sure needed the log.

Girl with red hair and blue cap – a few punches soon sorted her out.

Man using chain as weapon – I used my fists to push him to the floor.

Bright-red-haired girl with chainsaw – she was too tough for me, even with the defensive iron bar, so I left her.

Cool guy with black hair and shades – I deftly whipped him from his bike with the chain.

Cavefish guy on yellow bike – I hit him twice in succession with that plank of wood, moving back after each hit to avoid the spray, which so many times caught me out.

After collecting the special glasses

(Below) Make sure you select the right weapon for the job, or you'll end up eatin' tarmac.





from the Cavefish, I put the goggles on (press right mouse button when the icon appears in the top right corner) and waited until the timer went down from over 1,000 to zero before turning off to an invisible entrance.

Once inside I went further down the cave until I reached the ramp I needed to cross the bridge. I picked the ramp up and manoeuvred it into position before fixing it to my bike. I left this bottom section of the cave but stopped in the middle area to disconnect the ramp. My intention was to remove a few of the road pegs which guided the Cavefish. My plan paid off; the Cavefish ended up in a gorge, and I was almost ready to sail over the gorge.

I rode off again along Highway 9 and stopped at the car crash of Ripburger's men. I used my iron rod on the fender of the car and collected the hovering

device, which I quickly attached to my bike. I had everything I could possibly need to cross the bridge, so I went for one last look at the gorge before I knew it was time: time to take one hell of a run-up; time for Full Throttle.

The Factory

Across the other side I came across the Corley Motorcycle factory. I decided not to inspect it but to go south from my bike on foot. I came to a souvenir seller and merely looked at the T-shirts to get full-blown material details. However, while he was talking to me, I stole his yellow rabbit. I got back to my bike and headed north west to the Vultures' hangout. On arrival I used my rabbit on the minefield and picked up the battery which appeared after the rabbit snuffed it. I returned to the souvenir shop and tried the radio-controlled car for a short

time, but the battery was quickly exhausted. Luckily, I replaced the worn battery with the battery I had just found and drove the car north of the shop and through the turnstile of the stadium. The owner of the stall ran after the car and this gave me the opportunity to steal some more of those ridiculous rabbits – a whole box of them. They had a purpose, though, back at the Vultures' hideout, to which I quickly journeyed. I opened the box of bunnies on the minefield and picked up all but one of them, enjoying the music as I went. When the first bunny had been blown up by a mine, I followed the tracks and put another bunny down. I repeated this fun procedure until I finally reached those boneheads – the Vultures. They strung me up and forced me to talk. I told them that if they didn't talk to them, I'd call them names, such as Diapered Dynamo.

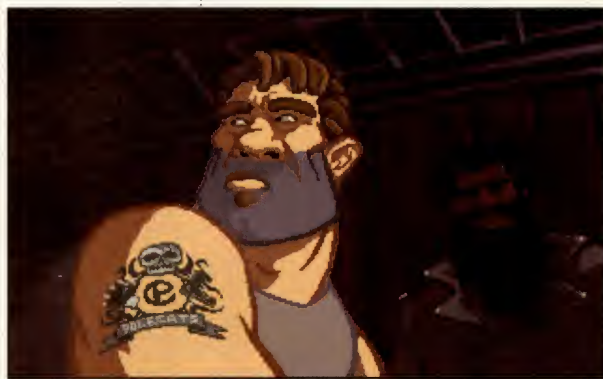
The Stadium

The next thing was my battle in the stadium. My car was unresponsive, but I had to follow the plans. Ripburger's car was guarding Maurine's, making the plan difficult to carry out. I had to jump over the ramp at the left of the stadium and land on top of the brown car to stall its engine. When it stalled, I nudged it all the way over to the other side of the stadium and up the ramp on the right-hand edge. Once the brown car had been pushed over, I followed it at great speed and smashed over the brown car towards Ripburger's vehicle, completing my task. When the cars were on fire, I ran to the yellow and black doors and set the stadium alight. Ripburger's men started chasing me, but I ran on top of a brown car and jumped on to the yellow car when it came near me. When they drove near to the fire in the foreground of the arena, I dashed into the fire. Ripburger's men followed and were burned to oblivion.



(Left) Leggit sharpish when the cops show and then pinch some of their gas. Bolt the sliding door with the padlock and then climb up the wall. Tempt the dog into the car and then hoist it into the air.

(Below) Ben's chums spot a bloke even hairier than them enter the bar - and we're not talking Santa Claus. "Hey! Are you in ZZ Top?"



SPOILED

“ Once back at the hideout I was told that Malcom had a secret entrance to the factory; I noted down the details. I also had a look around the parts of my bike which she had disassembled. Then I noted down one six-figure number: 154492. After this I took Mo's photos and went back to the factory, but went on foot around the back of the factory and followed Mo's instructions. I had to kick the wall in the right place, about three-quarters of the way along the path. And I had to get the timing right, which took a good half hour. But when the portal opened, I knew I was in for a treat – a night the scum Ripburger (or should that be SCUMM?) would never forget.

In Malcom's office, I noticed a safe embedded in the floor. I looked at it and entered the six digits inscribed on my Maurine's bike – 154492. Then I clicked the MXC button. The safe opened and inside I found a film and



passcard. I walked further into the factory, via the door to the right, and once in the next room I inserted the card in the card reading device. The door on the right unlocked and so I was able to enter the room.

Once inside the room, the huge projector seemed almost unstoppable, until I realised what the two handles did. To melt the film I had to stop the tape rolling and turn the lamp on full. I did this by switching the left lever to the bottom position and the right lever to the top. After this I returned to the room with the card slot and went through the left-hand, grey door where I found a suitable player for my newly acquired film.

The Duel

After escaping from the factory I found myself on the front of a dirty yellow road beast (in other words, a very big truck!). From here I pulled down the panel on the front of the machine, just below the glass. But Ripburger's view was impaired, so he used his cane to put it back down. With speed, I grabbed his

cane. The next job was to open the grill of the truck and push the cane into the fan to stop it from turning. I then climbed through the truck and on to the rear fuel section.

After using the iron bar on the right-hand pipe, Ripburger and I came careering into the back of the Vultures' plane. I got up and went up the ladder to the control area. Once here I turned on the computer by pressing the green button in the centre. From the Options screen I selected Take-Off, Post-Flight, Gear, and Raise Gear, which finally raised the landing gear to bring the whole affair to a close... or so I thought.

Let me tell you, being out on a limb with the dastardly Ripburger was no pleasant experience, and so I clambered into the control area of the yellow truck and turned on his computer by pressing the red button in the circle. I selected the Main Menu, Defence System, Machine Guns, Control and System Off. And that was the last we saw of him – I dashed into the Vultures' plane, got on my bike, which was parked on the left, and I'd made it... **Z**



(Left) Watch the bloke out of the Tango ad, he's a bit useful with his fists.

(Below) "Just give me land, lots of land, under starry skies above – don't fence me in!"



ZONE WARE

If you're still in need of a few back issues then look no further. Each issue costs £5.95 each (£7.95 outside the UK). This covers postage and packing and a small storage charge. Each back issue carries at least one cover disk crammed with games. Several back issues have the HD or CD option.

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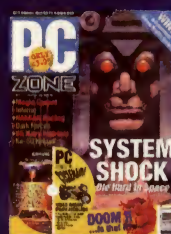
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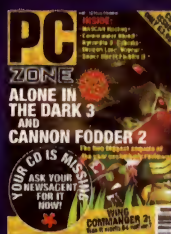
December 94

- HD version (AW003) System Shock
- CD version (AW004) Doom II Level Editor
- CD version (AW005) Doom levels plus some for Doom II; demo of DeltaV, Transport Tycoon plus loads more.



January 95

- HD version (AW006) Discworld
- CD version (AW007) Cyberwar, Creature Shock, Magic Carpet demo and more.



February 95

- HD version (AW008) Cannon Fodder 2
- CD version (AW009) U.S. Navy Fighters, Discworld, King's Quest 7, Noctropolis and more



March 95

- HD version (AW010) Kick Off 3: European Challenge
- CD version (2 CDs) (AW011) Demo of Alone 3, Heretic, The Lion King plus more Fully running version of OS/2 Warp



April 95

- HD version (AW012) XCOM-Terror from the Deep
- CD version (AW013) The final Doom showdown, demos such as Jungle Strike, Inferno, MetalTech.



May 95

- HD version (AW014) Pyrotechnica
- CD version (AW015) demo of BioForge, Lost Eden, Rise of the Triad, Orion Conspiracy, Full Throttle



June 95

- HD version (AW016) Baldies and Virtual Pool
- CD version (AW017) StarTrek: The Next Generation interactive demo, plus demos of Slipstream 5000, Warriors and loads more.



July 95

- HD version (AW018) Jagged Alliance
- CD version (AW019) playable demos of Alien Bree: Tower Assault, Braindead 13 and Kingdom: The Far Reaches plus a round up of action demos

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ZONE



This month a brand new section of PC Zone is spawned from the womb of our resident net nerd David "Macca" McCandless. Tune in to The Ponce and his mincing batch of downloadable software, risk the wrath of the UberFragMeister™ in Doom Watch – or memorise a list of download times just for the hell of it.

Let's get a few things straight. We don't say "Information Super Highway", "Infobahn" or "Cyberspace" here. We say "The Internet", "CompuServe", "CIX" and "Bulletin Boards". We don't use convoluted and meaningless abbreviations here such as TCP, HTML, POP and all that guff. And do you know why? Because we don't know what they mean. And why don't we know what they mean? Because they are rubbish, day-glo media buzzwords which are as meaningless as the lives of the people who made them up. All you want to know, and all we are going to tell you, is:

- 1) What's around this month?
- 2) Where can you download it from?
- 3) How much will it cost?
- 4) Is it any good?

MACDOOM

Yeah, two years after we got it, those wet, pastel-coloured thickos we call Mac Users are finally to be exposed to the greatest game in the universe. Later this month, *MacDoom* comes out with several cool features. Firstly, the Mac version is purported to run at 640x400 (instead of the PC's 320x200 resolution), although frame rate information is sadly lacking. Secondly, all the WADS and add-on episodes for PC *Doom I & II* will be compatible with the Mac Version. And – and! – thirdly and most importantly, Mac players will be able to play PC players over a network, modem or serial cable. Ha ha. The existing PC *Dooming* community is said to be sharpening its



collective mouse for the tidal wave of newbies, single mouse buttoned Mac drips who will be stumbling mindlessly onto Deathmatch forums the world over. Stay tuned.

DESCENT LEVEL COMPETITION



In an effort to promote its excellent 3D float 'em up, Interplay has launched a monthly level design compo. By downloading the DEVIL Descent Level Editor from its homepage

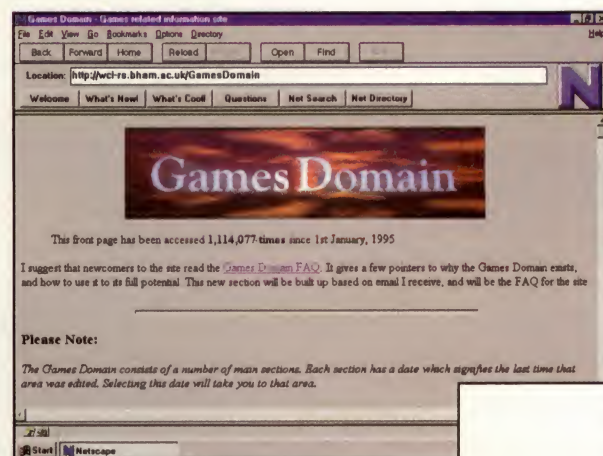
(<http://www.interplay.com/website/devil.html>) and building a scorching new mission, you can win "cool prizes" in each of three categories: best single level, best multi-player game, and best Geeko-sad-enough-to-devote-weeks-of-your-life-trying-to-fathom-the-intricacies-of-a-completely-incomprehensible-CAD-style package. Cool.

STAR CONTROL III

In a similar vein, Accolade, obviously a little stumped as to how to follow up its mega-sci-fi hit *Star Control II* (a very excellent game), has posted a survey form to be filled in by those would-be designers who think they could have something to contribute to the trilogy. Again, a host of "software prizes" are on hand for the best ideas and the form can be downloaded on CompuServe from GAMEAPUB\ACCOLADE library.

INTERNET GAMES

A whole host of games info, demos, shareware and just about anything games related can be found in the Games Domain at <http://wcl-rs.bham.ac.uk/GamesDomain>. The site is apparently "designed to be a central reference point" to all things games-wise and specialises in Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about specific and general gaming queries and walkthroughs for those of you too lazy to finish games by yourselves. There are pointers aplenty to other gaming sites and Games Domain even has its own online magazine pages called *The GD Review*. If you can't find what you're looking for, a search facility is provided to help you on your way.



DOOMWATCH

Another month. Another six million frags to the UberFragMeister™. The Doom "scene" is just getting bigger and bigger. People are getting better. A lot, lot better. Two new games servers have popped up in London. You can now play *Descent* multi-player over the modem. And the mother of all Doom tournaments will be taking place later this month.

The main innovation this month has been the release of SIRDESC.ZIP, another comms blip from the makers of SIRDOOM. As you may have gathered, SIRDESC allows multiple gameheads to play *Descent* on a suitable Games Connection BBS (i.e. any of those listed on this page). Released as shareware this time (SIRDOOM was freeware), the unregistered version is limited to three players only. Fork out \$25 and you can an play eight-player game. Performance is a little shaky. You'll need to be packing, at the very minimum, a dx266 with 8MB RAM, but a p60 or better is recommended. So far, response has been rather muted. Excellent Doom players have found their 2D Doom skills rather "incompatible" with *Descent's* 3D environment. Those armed with ThrustMasters and solid analogue sticks have the advantage. The big yes-yes, however, is the ability to join a game at any stage, without having to laboriously beep current players.

LIKE A VIRGIN...

One idea we came up with a few months ago was a series of Pro Celebrity Deathmatches. You know, Macca versus some games developers, John Romero etc. Who could we contact first? We mused (silently) to ourselves. Virgin Interactive Entertainment, distributor of *Doom II* in this country - it must be quite good. A fortnight of furious phone call flurries ensued. The game-testing department at VIE said that it was game, as was Dan Marchant, a high flying product manager who was reputedly "The Best". Unfortunately, though, Macca's reputation had preceded him and, as the date neared, Virgin began to exhibit severe signs of "the jitters". Finally, an emissary, Tony Ybus, was sent forth and partook in a modem game with UberFragMeister. Oh dear. When Macca reached 21 frags and Tony had a mere three, the battered and bloodied Virgin representative, gave up saying (verbatim): "You're amazing. You're much too good for us" (our rather self-congratulatory italics). We never heard another word from them.

BE SCARED, BE VERY SCARED

If you're thinking of delving into the modem Doom scene, sit up and take notice of the following five commandments.

1. Get the permission of the phone owner, your parents, your priest, or whoever holds moral and financial jurisdiction over your phone line.
2. Play after six and at weekends if possible. It's much cheaper.

3. Be polite and courteous to all you meet. You never know who might be into real shotguns.

4. The following players are to be avoided/challenged if you think you're crap/excellent. In no particular order (maybe): Macca, Escher, Pete, Piano, Danny, Loki, Hunter, Steves, DeeJ, Athelstan, Cranium, Guru, Premiere, Woah, Woof, Genesis, Poison, Darkfury, Acoma, Lambo.

5. Make sure you keep a grip on your life. Make sure you give plenty of attention to your family/kids/girlfriend/wife/mum/partner.

TOURNAMENTS

The long running Gamesnet tournament has finally ended after three months of wholesale gore-athons. Eight players made it to the final after a points-based initial round. They were (again in no particular order): Macca, Loki, Danny, Piano, Hunter, Forn, Overkill, and Lambo. Ooch. Macca was unfortunately knocked out in the quarter final by Loki (40-39) who then went on to lose to Danny (same score). Ha-de-ha. Meanwhile, Hunter passed straight into the semis after Forn and Overkill both dropped out after clocking £700+ in phone bills. Ooch. The final saw Hunter and Danny slogging it out. Danny won comfortably (40-27) and was deservedly proclaimed the winner.

CIX is running three league/tournies at the moment. You'll find them in the DOOM LADDER and DOOM LEAGUE conferences. The DOOM LADDER is an on-going ranking system, currently manned by 30-odd players. Newbies start at the bottom and challenge players up to two places above them. The game has to be played within a week, or else the challenger wins by default. Current top stars are NBaker, SStarkey, and Oggy. Meanwhile, in the Doom League, the 40+ players are split into five divisions and play "fixtures" over two months. To ease the boredom, a knockout Doom Cup is also being run with random draws pitting players from all divisions against each other in a Wimbledon-style tourney.

The Forest, too, is well in the throes of its Doom Championship. Similar in format to the CIX tourney, players are ranked in divisions, play each other over two months, and then are relegated or proclaimed "Champion Of Champions" - the most sought after Doom title (apparently). We preferred Fragosaurus Rex ourselves.

THE BIG ONE

The Doom Tourney to end all Doom Tourneys will be starting this month (July). Sponsored by us truly (PC Zone) and hosted by Gamesnet (London and Cardiff game servers), this month-long tournament will heap kudos, game credits, games and prizes (unconfirmed at press time, but probably modems and stuff like that) to the winners. Log on to Gamesnet for more details.

NEXT MONTH: Macca plays John Romero (TRUE!)



GAMES SERVERS

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The Games BBS

0181 561 3242
London (12 lines)

The Forest

01425 629629
Hampshire (12 lines)

Although you can connect with normal comms software (8-N-1) you'll need a program called SIRDOOM.ZIP to play *Doom* multi-player. You can download it, or, more sensibly, simply install it from this month's coverdisk.



COOL FILES

Essential, or maybe just perfunctory, gaming, killing and level designing downloadables from the files of the king of long words and the master of the metaphor – **The Ponce.**

(Above left) Rise of the Triad's dog mode. Hah. hah. hah. hah.

(Above right) Heretic – Doom In Tights – now uniquely configurable with Heep.

RISE OF THE TRIAD

The first rash of ROTT levels are beginning to appear hither and thither (mainly CompuServe and Internet) thanks mainly to Wayne Sikes's not-that-unlike-DEU-esque level editor, ROTTED v 1.1. As we all know, *Doom* barely broke stride as ROTT's much touted 16-player, client/server Deathmatch engine was released early this year. In fact, the big three – ROTT, *Descent*, and *Heretic* – have all failed to dislodge *Doom*'s long-established pole position in plural-player gaming circles. Suffice to say, ROTT proved a big crowd puller at March's Computer Shopper Show, with Macca (aka King UberFragMeister) finding himself distinctly "not-the-best" as tech support guys Miles "Primitiv" Tudor and Jim "Insert witty nickname here" Clover spent four days "mulling" him. Big hits were the team game option (4 v 4) and the infinitely-configurable Combatt options with respawning, time limits, lighting level, and damage all customisable. The main problem seemed to be the consistent bad design of the multiplayer-only levels. All the new levels released since have been Combatt levels. Check out:



Dave's CommBat Levels	DAVE1.ZIP	7625	3 levels
Tiger 1 Levels	TIGER1.ZIP	2231	4 "awesome" levels

DARK FORCES

New levels have been somewhat slow in appearing for this Mark Hamill 'em up (the perils, no doubt, of not releasing a network version). Only two custom missions have materialised since the details of *Dark Forces*' level structure was revealed – the excitingly titled "Modified Jabba Ship" (REVENGE.ZIP, 52146 bytes) and the equally thrilling-sounding "Don's Add-on Level" (DONSDF1.ZIP 23846 bytes). The recent release, however, of DFUSE v 0.91 (*Dark Forces Utilities And Editor*, DFUSE091.ZIP, 962554 bytes) may change things, may prove to be the DEU of the *Star Wars* world, may expand DF to new heights – and may not. Somehow I think, despite its superlative engine, without a network option, this game is not going to grow.

HERETIC

Reasonable amount of activity on the *Doom-In-Tights* scene this month. Deathmatch levels are proving as popular as ever. Some people (mainly Americans) are still laughing at the chicken joke, but overall, *Heretic* Deathmatch is taken a lot less seriously than *Doom* Deathmatch in the gaming community. Nevertheless, some interesting add-ons have appeared. BOOM v 3.2 (BOOM3-2.ZIP, 7033 bytes) offers a whole new set of weapons

for *Heretic*, including a long-range flame thrower, lava bombs, and landmines. It has to be used in conjunction with the HACKEDITOR v 1 which is DEHACKED for HERETIC basically (HHE.ZIP 59915 bytes). Also released this month is HEEP v 7.01, a 32-bit *Heretic* Level Editor running under DOS4GW. Again, very DEU-esque but worth a look (HEEP.ZIP 609530 bytes).

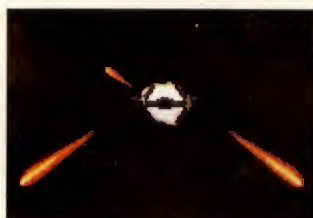
DESCENT

Bar the release of version 1.4 (super VGA support – wow!), very little has been happening to the Zero-Gravity Wonder in recent weeks. An interesting downloadable can be found on CompuServe (ACTION GAMES/HOT DESCENT), namely DTX v0.93A (DTX.ZIP, 209449 bytes) which allows you to extract and replace the graphics and sounds from *Descent*. So, yes, you can put your boss'/headmaster's/dad's face on a wall and shoot it. And yes, you can sample yourself farting/burping/making wet sucky noises with your mouth and add those to the game too. Hours of fun no doubt. A definite must for *Descenders* is DEVIL (DEVIL10.ZIP 259647) a new level editor for Windows. In fact Interplay is launching its own level competition (see NEWSY BITS).

DOOM

The *Doom* phenomenon rolls on and on with the big news that *MacDoom* is soon to be released (see NEWSY BITS). Meanwhile, on the scene that really counts – the PC *Doom* scene (which, incidentally, has been around for two years, *MacDoomers*) – a few new files need bringing to your attention this month. Yet more level editors are appearing. The elegantly named WAD STUDIO v 065B (WADSTO65.ZIP 157171 bytes) for Windows has appeared, as well as a new 32-bit Windows 95-ready version of DEU (W32DEU52.ZIP, 450964) which promises enhanced speed, performance and usability but needs WIN32, WindowsNT, or Windows 95 to run. DOOM-IT v 5.9, a front-end and setup-replacer for *Doom*, has been around for a while but it's had a staggering 12355 downloads, so it must be good. And finally, some young upstart Deathmatchers have seen fit to release a Deathmatch guide without having played the UberFragMeister™ himself DMFILE.ZIP, 84844 BYTES).





X-WING ETC

Redundant, obsolete, and old fashioned the LucasArts' money spinning *X-Wing/B-Wing/Y-Wing* trilogy may be, but some people still sign up for afternoons of the stuff. And with the Collector's Edition rearing its freshly texture-mapped head sometime this month, a renaissance of *X-Wing* may be on the cards. In the cobwebby annals of the FSFORUM on CompuServe rest decidedly "minority" libraries. Air Traffic sim-heads, FS5 buffs, scenery designers, and people who would pay £180 an hour to play with a real, industrial flight simulator at Gatwick. In the Space Combat library the files are *X-Wing* based. Among the hordes of *X-Wing* pilots famed after *Star Trek* characters, the coolest file is the TIE-FIGHTER mission builder (TMB.ZIP140725) which allows you to totally recustomise any *TIE Fighter* mission right down to the messages, briefings, and Akbar's speech impediments. No young Skywalker should be without the *X-Wing Ship Editor* by Mark Schlageter (XWSE50.ZIP 184756 bytes). This gives you full controls over the performance, firepower, and handling characteristics of every single ship in *X-Wing*. Give yourself the weight and turning circle of a Star Destroyer- hol. Turn *TIE*



Fighters into *X-Wings* to confuse your wingmen - hah. For true rich sadoes, download TIEAVI.ZIP - a Video For Windows version of a German TV ad for *TIE Fighter*. A snip at 2,289,885 bytes. Lovely.

(Above) There are absolutely loads and loads of *X-Wing* goodies knocking around if you look hard enough.

COOLER FILES?

If you've spotted some "excellent" files, *Doom* Wads, new levels, editors, or anything "cool" on your rounds round the "global village", then wrap them in "inverted commas", whop them on a disk, scribble down where you found them, and kudos (and maybe a prize) will be yours. Send to COOL FILES, PC ZONE ON-LINE, 19 BOLSOVER STREET, LONDON, W1P 7HJ. Or, alternatively, e-mail us at:

CompuServe: 100142,2152

CIX: PCZONE

Internet: PCZONE@cix.compulink.co.uk

Download times

(approximately in mins)

File size	9600	14.4	28.8
10K	00:10	00:07	00:03
50K	00:53	00:35	00:17
100K	01:46	01:11	00:35
250K	04:26	03:00	01:28
500K	08:33	05:58	02:53
1MB	18:05	12:05	06:12
2MB	36:00	24:00	15:05

Note: download times vary massively depending on the quality of your phone line, the speed of your UART/Serial port, and the compressability of the file.

UPDATE WATCH

A quasi-autonomous, semi-regular, geometrically designed table in which the current rash of updates, hasty bug fixes, and *Frontier: First Encounter* patches are rounded up and herded onto this page.

GAME	COMPANY	UPDATE TO	FILENAME	SIZE	NOTES
1942: Pacific Airwar	MicroProse	v 1.5b	PAW15B.ZIP	299732 upgrade	Need version 1.4 or later to
BioForge	Origin	GUS patch	GUSBIO.EXE	70505	Gravis Ultrasound patch for BioForge music
CyberRace	CyberDreams	v 1.22	CR122P.ZIP	253935	Fixes problems running CD version on Pentiums
DarkSeed	CyberDreams	v 1.5	DSISPC.ZIP	227069	As above
Descent	Interplay	v 1.4	DCENT14SW.ZIP	2876251	Full shareware version with support for I/O headset, 3Dmax shutter glasses, and SVGA 640x480 screen mode
F14 Fleet Defender	MicroProse	v 2.0	F14V20.ZIP	479085	No details
First Encounters	GameTek	v 0.2	FE_EFP_V.ZIP FE_ECD_V.ZIP	237167 237427	Patch for disk version Patch for CD version (note neither upgrade will work on previously patched files)
FS4 Scenery	SubLogic	-	USAFIX.ZIP	48428	Fixes incorrect ILS heading alignments for USA EAST/WEST scenery disks
Magic Carpet	Electronic Arts	-	LEVELS.ZIP	204670	Fixes bug on level 50
Stone Prophet	SSI	v 1.1	STONE1_1.ZIP	522524	No details
Tank Commander	Domark	v 1.1	TANKFIX.ZIP	418932	Corrects serial/modem data loss on Pents.
Terminal Velocity	Apogee	v 1.1	TV11SPT.ZIP	512601	No details
US Navy Fighters	Origin	v 1.1	USNF11.ZIP	969633	No details

BUYERS' GUIDE

Welcome to the all-singing, all-dancing **PC Zone Buyers Guide**, which is to gaming what the BR timetable is to trainspotters. You name it, it's here – painstakingly compiled by our very own engine driver.

Issue 2 – May 1993

Archer Maclean's Pool

(87: Recommended) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Sport £25.99

Excellent pool game. An impressive, if not wildly different, sequel to Whirlwind Snooker.

Battlechess 4000

(81: Recommended) Electronic Arts – Chess £44.99
Brilliant, funny and with a workmanlike chess sim attached. But for how long will it stay funny?

Blade Warrior

(40) Zeppelin Games – Combat £9.99 (£12.99 CD)
Arcade combat jaunt with a smattering of detailed quest elements.

Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space

(90: Classic) Interplay – Strategy £39.99
Testing strategy/historical simulation. Buy it.

Crystalline Of Arbores

(47) Simarils – Role-Playing Game £2.99
A badly designed RPG with only its price to recommend it.

Harquequet

(66) Gremlin Graphics – Board Game £11.99
A good, but uninspired conversion of the classic board game.

Jordan In Flight

(70) Electronic Arts – Sport £39.99
Looks good, plays okay. There's just not enough to it, and it's a bit too easy.

Metal Mutants

(45) Simarils – Combat £2.99
Impress your friends – this disk makes an unusual coaster that will brighten up any coffee table.

Ringsworld

(80: Recommended) Tsunami – Adventure £39.99
An engaging interactive point 'n' click sci-fi romp.

Shadow Of The Comet

(87: Recommended) Infogrames – Adventure £44.99
A successful attempt to recreate the work of Lovecraft for game players. A must buy.

Space Quest V: Roger Wilco The Next Mutation

(72) Sierra On-Line – Adventure £39.99
Better than the usual twee nonsense from Sierra.

Spear Of Destiny

(60) Psygnosis – Shoot 'Em Up £39.99
Out classed, out of time and overpriced.

Storm Master

(70) Simarils – Strategy £12.99
An attractively presented and absorbing strategy game.

Volt Of Darkness

(70) US Gold – Role-Playing Game £35.99
Good script, easy to play but a little short.

Wacky Funsters

(30) Accolade – Compendium (not available in the UK)
The game never gets beyond being the equivalent of an enjoyable demo.

X-Wing

(88: Recommended) LucasArts – Space Combat £45.99
Fabbo space-based shoot 'em up.

Xenobots

(75) Electronic Arts – Combat £39.99
A spanking good, strategic shoot 'em up, but too short a life expectancy for our liking.

Zool

(85: Recommended) Gremlin Graphics – Platform Game £34.99.

The best platform game for the PC so far.

Issue 3 – June 1993

DJ Puff

(62) Codemasters – Platform Game £9.99
Okay, but it looks like an 8-bit console game.

Dayflight

(50) MicroProse – Flight Sim £44.99
Far too easy, major flight model discrepancies and grass can kill you. All in all, a pile of jobs.

International Athletics

(55) Zeppelin Games – Sport £9.99
Fun as far as it goes, which isn't far.

International Rugby Challenge

(67) Domark – Sport £34.99
Scores a try, but doesn't quite manage the conversion.

Serpent Isle: Ultima VII Part Two

(89: Recommended) Origin – Role-Playing Game £44.99

Origin's flair for storytelling and atmosphere creating pays off once again.

Spaceward Hol

(25) New World Computing – Space Combat £44.99
There are better strategy games for free.

Strike Commander

(65) Origin – Flight Sim £44.99
There are lots of brilliant bits, but unfortunately there's also an equal number of "unbrilliant" bits.

The Gruesome

(70) Beau Jolly – Compilation £39.99
A good way to save £81.98 and try out some good, if slightly old, games.

The Legacy

(60) MicroProse – Role-Playing Game £44.99
A brave attempt to create a gothic role-playing game which doesn't quite gel.

The Terminator 2029

(50) Bethesda Softworks – Combat £29.99
Terminal Case.

Tony La Russa II

(73) SSI – Sport – Deleted
An exceptionally-detailed baseball game, and almost a very good one.

Unlimited Adventures

(59) SSI – Role-Playing Game £37.99
Competent, but not the most essential purchase ever.

Wayne Gretzky Hockey 3

(69) Bethesda Softworks – Sport £44.99
May appeal to buffs, but has nothing to attract the casual browser.

World Cricket

(30) Zeppelin Games – Sport £9.99
Unfortunately fails to provide either action or strategy.

Issue 4 – July 1993

Boston Bomb Club

(70) Simarils – Puzzle £9.99
Fairly basic but fairly addictive puzzler.

Cohort II

(30) Impressions – Strategy £34.99
All the fun and entertainment of a barium meal.

Eye of the Beholder III: Legend of Myth Drannor

(64) SSI – Role-Playing Game £39.99
Has none of the feel or atmosphere of its prequels. Strictly for the yellow-fingernailed brigade only. I'm afraid.

Freddy Pharkas Frontier Pharmacist

(85: Recommended) Sierra On-Line – Adventure £39.99

An utterly absorbing, entertaining and difficult point 'n' click adventure with some incredibly naff in-jokes.

Meatstorm

(70) Empire – Strategy £39.99
You've read the review – you decide.

Nippon Sales Inc

(66) Global Software – Adventure £34.99
Great plot, nice artwork, decent price but nothing out of the ordinary.

Populous And The Promised Lands

(85: Recommended) Hit Squad – Strategy £14.99
One of the greatest games ever written – buy it!

SimLife For Windows

(69) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Strategy £35.99

If you liked SimEarth... Fun, but not lasting fun.

Space Hulk

(90: Classic) Electronic Arts – Strategy £44.99
Death, destruction, blood, gore, tension, fear, and a damn good game as well.

Starblade

(22) Simarils – Space combat/Trading £9.99
It crashes a lot, but why care?

Strike Fleet

(75) Hit Squad – Wargame £14.99
A worthwhile addition to naval sims.

Super Ski II

(20) Microids – Sport £9.99
Sad, specy ski game.

The 7th Guest

(60) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Adventure £44.99 (CD)

Technologically okay, but disappointingly weak on gameplay.

Tom Landry Strategic Football

(75) Merit Software – Sport £44.99
A very good, strategic, American football sim that could do with more player involvement.

V For Victory 3 – Market Garden

(82: Recommended) Three-Sixty Pacific – Wargame £34.99

Why bother with boards, hexes and counters when you've got games like this?

Where In Space Is Carmen Sandiego?

(85: Recommended) Electronic Arts – Edutainment £39.99
Educational, fun and highly recommended.

Issue 5 – August 1993

10 Intelligent Strategy Games

(60) Oxford Softworks – Compendium £34.99
Good sampler and cheap if you need them all.

888 Attack Sub

(78) Hit Squad – Submarine Simulation £14.99
Sub-standard? Definitely not!

Air Bucks v1.2

(49) Impressions – Strategy £34.99
A potentially interesting variation on a theme, which fails largely due to being more than a tad unexciting.

A potentially interesting variation on a theme, which fails largely due to being more than a tad unexciting.

Betrayal At Kronder

(91: Classic) Dynamix – Role-Playing Game £44.99
The licence makes a lot of difference – great story, great game.

Championship Manager '93

(75) Domark – Sport £29.99
An undoubtedly "serious" management game that's involving, but occasionally unnecessarily slow.

Cheese Maniac 5 Billion & 1

(60) Spectrum Holobyte – Chess £44.99
Falls between two stools – and I'm being very nice here.

Dizzy Collection

(60) Codemasters – Compilation £35.99
Contains: Fast Food Dizzy, Fantasy World Dizzy, Kwik Snack, Dizzy Prince Of Yolkfolk, Magiland Dizzy.

A poor egg-scuse to make totally unfunny egg yolks. Just about playable.

Ishtar 2: Messengers Of Doom

(50) Simarils – Role-Playing Game £32.99
Would have been a real contender if it had been released a year or two earlier.

James Pond 2: Codename Robocod

(87: Recommended) Millennium – Platform Game £30.99 – Only available in a compilation

"Nifty scrolling, great gameplay" is our first

remark on playing Robocod, closely followed by "Has anyone got a pair of sunglasses?"

Premier Manager

(59) Gremlin Graphics – Sport £29.99
Not recommended as a full-priced game – it would make a good, fun budget game.

Prince Of Persia 2: The Shadow And The Flame

(89: Recommended) Brøderbund – Platform Game £39.99

We reckon they could have done more with it, but it's a corker nevertheless.

Protostar

(80: Recommended) Tsunami – Space Combat/Trading £39.99

A slick game that's full of nice touches and good ideas, but if you're not patient, don't bother.

Syndicate

(90: Classic) Electronic Arts – Strategy £44.99
Incredibly violent, completely amoral and brilliant fun.

The Cycles

(55) Hit Squad – Sport £12.99
Sadly, an overpriced and underpowered ride into the past.

War In The Gulf

(81: Recommended) Empire – Wargame £34.99
Another great set of blood-thirsty missions for one of the most playable 3D battle sims ever.

Worlds Of Legend

(73) Mindscape – Role-Playing Game £25.99
Perfectly reasonable but rather old-fashioned fantasy RPG jobbie.

WWF Wrestlemania

(58) Hit Squad – Sport £9.99
Fairly limited beat 'em up, which was delivered much better on the console.

Issue 6 – September 1993

Blade Of Destiny: Realms Of Arkania

(78) US Gold – Role-Playing Game £39.99
Large in scale, absorbing to play – but more suited to "serious" role-players than your average gamer.

Blue Force

(35) Tsunami – Adventure £39.99
Tiresome controls and sloppy design mar what could have been a decidedly average adventure.

Caesar's Palace For Windows

(65) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Casino Compendium £35.99

A good compilation; unnervingly addictive.

Fields Of Glory

(89: Recommended) MicroProse – Wargame £44.99
A brilliant sim that puts even the most reluctant wargamer right into the thick of it.

Only its speed prevents it from being awarded Classic status.

Flashback

(89: Recommended) US Gold – Platform Game £37.99
It's Prince Of Persia in the future (but this time he's got a gun).

Lotus – The Ultimate Challenge

(68) Gremlin Graphics – Driving Game £34.99
Nothing particularly new, but good fun, especially in two player mode.

Maniac Mansion 2: Day Of The Tentacle

(85: Recommended) LucasArts – Adventure £42.99
Lovely graphics, good music, quite challenging but a bit too American for my roast beef and dumplings taste buds.

MIG-29: Fulcrum

(70) Domark – Flight Sim £14.99
Almost no scenery, but a nice flight model.

Monopoly

(75) Supervision – Board Game £34.99
A faithful conversion, which is slightly too flashy for its own good.

Napoleonic

(79) On-Line Entertainment – Wargame Compendium – Deleted £34.99

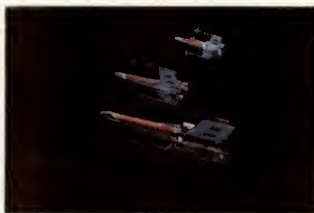
Three excellent and original Napoleonic wargames for tactical experts.

Open Golf

(50) Ocean – Sport – Deleted
A disappointing foray into the world of golf sims from Ocean.

Pinball Dreams

(78) 21st Century Entertainment – Pinball Simulation £37.99



(Left) *X-Wing*: groove on down to the old "destroy the Death Star, save the croissant-haired princess" tune.

As enjoyable as the real thing, but a bit on the pricey side.

Prehistorik 2

(50) Titus - Platform Game £7.99

A very average platform game, which competes with some budget titles but little else.

Rags To Riches

(60) Interplay - Strategy £39.99

Lacks excitement; unlikely to have a long life.

Return Of The Phantom

(73) MicroProse - Adventure £44.99

Delightfully atmospheric and aimed at beginners, but a tad too short and easy to justify the price.

Sensible Soccer

(70) Renegade - Sport £34.99

The best football game around for the PC, but still not as good as it should've been.

Space Legends

(75) Empire - Compilation £34.99

You'll like at least two out of three.

The Immortal

(70) Hit Squad - Role-Playing Game £14.99

At least four Sunday afternoons' play we reckon.

Tornado

(93: Classic) Digital Integration - Flight Sim £44.99

The more you play, the deeper it gets - eventually you'll need a bathyscape. Not for beginners.

Issue 7 - October 1993

Ambush At Sorinor

(70) Empire - Strategy £39.99

Short, sharp missions, and plenty of them, make this an interesting strategy game.

Archer Maclean's Pool (256 colour version)

(88: Recommended) Virgin Interactive Entertainment - Sport £30.99

Exactly what it claims to be - the same game with more colours. Score assumes you don't have the original.

Caesar Deluxe

(70) Impressions - Strategy £34.99

More user-friendly than its predecessor but the game remains the same.

Clash Of Steel

(67) SSI - Wargame £39.99

Intricate and well presented wargame with plenty of appeal for the dedicated wargamer.

Day Of The Tentacle (CD)

(87: Recommended) LucasArts - Adventure £45.99

A very taxing, very American adventure, with some of the best animation ever.

Dune (CD)

(82: Recommended) Virgin Interactive Entertainment - Adventure £44.99

A shining example of a good game made into a great game for CD.

Eric The Unready (CD)

(77) Accolade - Adventure £34.99

Hilarious, but the creaky interface isn't so funny.

F-15 Strike Eagle II

(85: Recommended) Kixx - Flight Sim £16.99

It still holds its own in a dogfight.

Flames Of Freedom

(70) Kixx - Strategy/Arcade £9.99

A bit old, a bit saggy, but will still give purists much fun.

Galactic Warrior Rats

(75) Alternative Software - Arcade £9.99

Totally simple, totally basic, but quite good fun nevertheless.

Gunboat

(54) Hit Squad - Submarine Simulation £14.99

A better idea than game.

Hardball

(20) Hit Squad - Sport £12.99

Interesting only as an example of how bad baseball games used to be.

Imperial Pursuit

(80: Recommended) LucasArts - Space Sim £19.99

Long, involving "story-driven" tour of duty, perfect for Skywalker-wannabes.

King's Quest VI (CD)

(90: Classic) Sierra On-Line - Adventure £49.99

Excellent use of a CD, despite the "soft" story.

Lands Of Lore

(90: Classic) Virgin Interactive Entertainment - Role-

Playing Game £35.99

A tasty and involving reminder of what *Eye Of The Beholder III* could have been.

Legend Of Kyrandia (CD)

(82: Recommended) Virgin Interactive Entertainment - Adventure £44.99

Stunning to look at, but not really challenging enough if you're the type who has played a lot of adventures before.

LHX Attack Chopper

(88: Recommended) Hit Squad - Flight Sim £14.99

Still one of the classic flight sims.

Loom

(72) Kixx - Adventure £14.99

Simple and enchanting adventure; an ideal game for beginners.

Mean 18"

(60) Hit Squad - Sport £9.99

Reasonable mid-table golf game.

MIG-29

(75) MicroProse - Flight Sim £19.99

An excellent add-on for *Falcon 3.0* fans, but nothing groundbreaking in flight sim terms.

NHL Hockey

(91: Classic) Electronic Arts - Sport £44.99

A great version of a brilliant game.

Pirates Gold!

(75) MicroProse - Strategy £44.99

As good as the original. Unfortunately, it almost is the original.

Railroad Tycoon Deluxe

(72) MicroProse - Strategy £39.99

Not significantly better than the original, but if you haven't got that then add 20% to the score.

Ringworld (CD)

(82: Recommended) Tsunami - Adventure £39.99

An alternative to having it on disk; nothing more!

Rules Of Engagement 2

(91: Classic) Impressions - Strategy £44.99

A game of great depth and complexity.

Seal Team

(77) Electronic Arts - Shoot 'Em Up/Strategy £44.99

In storyboard form I imagine it looked fabulous. In transition to code, however, it feels like something has gone astray.

Simon The Sorcerer

(86: Recommended) Adventuresoft UK Ltd - Adventure £39.99

At last an Anglo answer to the average American adventure. Recommended.

The Lost Vikings

(80: Recommended) Interplay - Arcade £34.99

An excellent puzzle/platform/arcade game (categorise it yourself, we can't be bothered).

The Patrician

(65) Daze Marketing - Trading Sim £34.99

Desperate for a trading game set in the Hanseatic League but which could have been given more zap? Look no further.

Wing Commander Academy

(60) Origin - Flight Sim £19.99

This is only really worth it for *Wing Commander* combat addicts.

Issue 8 - November 1993

Battle Chess

(45) Interplay - Chess £44.99

Stalemate for the *Battlechess* series.

Blue Force (CD)

(40) Tsunami - Adventure £39.99

A criminal waste of a CD.

Conquered Kingdoms

(71) Mirage - Wargame £44.99

The rather second rate packaging and laughable manual conceals a highly playable, fantasy wargame.

Cover Girl Strip Poker

(40) On-Line Entertainment - Card Game £34.99

An appallingly bad poker game; a weak excuse for some dirty pics.

Flight Simulator 5.0

(90: Classic) Microsoft - Flight Sim £35.00

The definitive flying simulation, but not the definitive flying "game".

Gear Works

(62) The Software Business - Puzzle Game £19.99

Not good enough for the price and not cheap enough for what it is.

Grand Prix Circuit

(50) Hit Squad - Driving £12.99

Playable but crap for the price.

Hard Drivin' 2

(30) Hit Squad - Driving £12.99

Unplayable and crap for the price.

Homeworld: Gateway II

(75) Accolade - Adventure £39.99

Long, hard trek through pretty unatmospheric space.

Lord Of The Rings

(70) Interplay - Role-Playing Game £44.99

New and improved role-playing Tolkien jaunt for patient fantasy fans only.

Lost In Time

(69) Coktel Vision - Adventure £44.99

Tough, good looking adventure that comes a cropper at the end.

Motor Stars

(75) Revell - Racing £59.99

Sex on CD for kit-heads but coffee mat for every-one else.

Patriot

(45) Three-Sixty Pacific - Wargame £44.95

A revolutionary but seriously flawed approach to land-based wargaming.

Shadowlands

(65) Hit Squad - Role-Playing Game £12.99

One for the RPG addicts.

Solitaire's Journey

(87) Mirage - Puzzle £44.99

The closest that solitaire fans will get to Heaven on Earth.

Stronghold

(80: Recommended) SSI - Strategy £35.99

Extremely addictive even if you'd normally steer clear of D&D™.

Super Space Invaders

(75) Hit Squad - Arcade £9.99

Here's a blast from the past for less than a round of drinks.

T2

(80: Recommended) Virgin Interactive Entertainment - Arcade £29.99

Mindless, chaotic and highly addictive.

The Silver Seed (Ultima VII Add-On Disk)

(50) Origin - Role-Playing Game £19.99

An utterly pointless addition to a brilliant game. One can only turn to Origin and ask "Why?"

Troddlers

(79) SCI - Puzzle Game £29.99

Not at all bad, but it smacks too much of other games to achieve classic status.

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Blue Angels

(30) Hit Squad - Flight Sim £12.99

Interesting, but hardly spectacular.

Brutal Football

(65) Millennium - Sport £29.99

Too much violence, not enough game.

Chuck Yeager's Air Combat

(85: Recommended) Hit Squad - Flight Sim £14.99

Living proof that pensioners still have what it takes.

Clix

(62) The Genesis Arcade - Puzzle Game £14.99

Nice idea, shame about the gameplay.

Cogito

(57) Mindscape - Puzzle Game £29.99

A reasonably entertaining and challenging puzzle game, but only for the patient.

Dark Sun: Shattered Lands

(83: Recommended) SSI - Role-Playing Game £45.99

The next best thing to an *Ultima*.

Dino Dini's Goal

(60) Virgin Interactive Entertainment - Sport £35.99

Kick Off with sideways options (but it works). Not as good as *Sensible Soccer*.

Dracula

(65) Psynopsis - Arcade £39.99

A good, challenging game, but the execution should have been better.

Frontier: Elite II

(95: Classic) Gametek - Space Trading Sim £39.99

Without doubt an unrivalled classic; nothing else even comes close.

Front Page Sports Football Pro

(85: Recommended) Dynamix - Sport £39.99

The best around, but you'll definitely need a high-spec machine.

Gobillins

(50) Coktel Vision - Puzzle - £39.99

An unimproved CD version of an original but inspired game.

Hook

(35) Hit Squad - Adventure £12.99

At last we have perhaps the most faithful film conversion around. The movie was a turkey, so is the game.

Jack The Ripper

(39) Mirage - Adventure £44.99

Ugly, unpleasant and boring. I know, give it a job with *PC Zone*.

Jutland

(72) On-Line Entertainment - Strategy £59.99

Good but sadly there are too many unnecessary gimmicks.

Kasparov's Gambit

(85: Recommended) Electronic Arts - Chess £44.99

Excellent chess game with attitude and personality.

Magic Candle II

(80: Recommended) Hit Squad - Role-Playing Game £14.99

Good as an RPG, excellent as a budget.

NFL Coaches Club Football

(70) MicroProse - Sport £44.99

Certainly a good attempt but it's a shame that it's badly let down by the rather poor passing system.

Privateer

(75) Origin - Flight Sim £49.99

Wing Commander fans will love this. *X-Wing* fans won't. It's as simple as that.

Sim Farm

(79) Maxis - Strategy £34.99

Quite good if you like farming, but not as good as *Sim City*.

Steel Thunder

(60) Hit Squad - Arcade £12.99

Reasonable fun, but not one you'd come back to.

Street Fighter II

(81: Recommended) US Gold - Beat 'Em Up - £29.99

Addictive and violent but the cross over to the PC hindered unless you invest in a game pad.

Strike Commander: Tactical Operations

(80: Recommended) Origin - Flight Sim £19.99

Essential if you're determined to get the most out of *Strike Commander*.

V for Victory 4: Gold-Juno-Sword

(78) Three-Sixty Pacific £34.99

It's still the best computer wargames system but it needs a shot in the arm... or leg... or both even.

When Two Worlds War

(63) Impressions - Wargame £34.99

An unattractive attempt at a strategy wargame that fails to add anything new - including excitement. Give us dice and counters any day...

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8 Ball Deluxe



(Left) *Simon The Sorcerer*: at last, an adventure game with a sense of humour – albeit a bit Pratchett-esque.

Goblins 2

(67) Coktel Vision – Puzzle Game £44.99
Zany puzzle game, frustrating at times but mostly good fun.

IndyCar Racing

(93: Classic) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Driving £44.99

The new definitive driving game. And it comes with a free moustache.

Innocent Until Caught

(84: Recommended) Psygnosis – Adventure £44.99
Well worth nicking. Ho ho.

Jurassic Park

(73) Ocean – Adventure £34.99

Despite some irritating flaws, an atmospheric and addictive game.

Knights Of The Sky

(79) Kixx – Strategy £16.99

A game that's well worth buying for the two-player option alone.

Links Championship Course: Innsbrook

(75) US Gold – Sport £24.99
If you really want another *Links* course, then this is one.

Links

(80: Recommended) Kixx – Sport £16.99,

An excellent golf game for anyone with a less than ninja PC.

Lords Of Power

(85: Recommended) Ubisoft – Strategy £39.99

A first class simulation which you would be mad not to buy.

Network Q RAC Rally 2

(80: Recommended) Europress Software – Driving £34.99

A rather good addition to the current crop of driving games, if you can stand the opponent's amazing skills.

Newsweek Interactive

(30) The Software Business – General Interest £39.99
Over-priced, over-patronising and over here.

Night Shift

(70) Kixx – £12.99

A suitably frantic and frustrating puzzler.

Oceans Below

(70) The Software Business – Edutainment £39.99

Initially interesting, but unfortunately the novelty all too soon wears off. Strictly for scuba diving fans.

Proteostar (CD)

(80: Recommended) Accolade – Space Sim £39.99

Absorbing, well designed and, if you can forgive its weaker moments, it'll keep you busy for ages.

Return To Zork (CD)

(90: Classic) Activision – Adventure £49.99

Bad news for text-adventure purists who thought that *Zork* was sacred. Ha!

Return To Zork

(90: Classic) Activision – Adventure £45.99

A highly imaginative and enjoyable adventure game with some very clever knobs attached.

Shadowcaster

(66) Electronic Arts – Role-Playing Game £44.99

Neither *Wolfenstein* nor *Underworld*. And not much in-between.

Speed Racer

(49) Accolade – Racing £39.99

Nice intro, shame about the game.

Star Trek: Judgement Rites

(79) Interplay – Adventure £44.99

The stories are poetic and the variety of gameplay is "fascinating" but it is not the best flight sim or adventure game.

Strike Squad

(25) Empire – Strategy £39.99

Just turn the page and get on with enjoying life, okay?

The Blue And The Gray

(78) Impressions – Wargame £39.99

Dedicated blood 'n' guts fans will find it a little simplistic, but it's a great all-round wargame with hidden depths and long-term playability.

The Even More Incredible Machine

(89: Recommended) Dynamix 39.99

If you've never played *The Incredible Machine* now's the time to start. So what are you waiting for?

World Class Rugby

(60) Audiogenic – Sport £14.99

Not really worth the waggle.

World War Two: Battles Of The South Pacific

(62) Mirage – Strategy/Action £44.99

Innovative mix of naval strategy and action. The gameplay doesn't quite live up to expectations –

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Advantage Tennis

(55) Infogrames – Sport £35.99

Unexciting tennis game that lacks punch.

Alone In The Dark 2

(97: Classic) Infogrames – Adventure – £39.99

Absolutely Brilliant! What the PC was made for.

Alone in the Dark (CD)

(92: Classic) Infogrames – Adventure £44.99

Still the best thing since sliced bread. Buy it.

B-Wing

(72) US Gold – Space Sim £19.99

Your sister either fancied Han Solo or Luke Skywalker. You'll either fancy B-Wing or, er, something else.

Capitol Hill (CD)

(75) Software Toolworks – Edutainment £39.99

Comprehensive introduction to American politics

Chessmaster 4000 Turbo

(90: Classic) Mindscape – Chess £34.99

Tough opponent: gentle teacher.

Critical Path (CD)

(72) Media Vision – Adventure £49.99

Slick and atmospheric but way too short.

Dungeon Hack

(62) SSI – Role-Playing Game £39.99

Not enough there. Not enough design options. Not enough gameplay. Very hardened and grizzled role-players only.

Fire And Ice

(75) Renegade – Platform Game £29.99

A fun, but difficult game, marred only by an over-inflated price and ridiculous copy protection.

Flight Sim Toolkit

(80: Recommended) Domark – Simulation £49.99

Recommended, but only if you find *Stunt Island* limiting. It can be very heavy going.

Global Domination

(65) Impressions – Strategy £39.99

Slick, addictive strategy game but it presents no long term challenge.

Goblins 3

(75) Coktel Vision – Puzzle Game £39.99

Good for beginners and a pleasant diversion for seasoned adventurers.

Kingmaker

(88: Recommended) US Gold – Board Game £37.99

Without doubt the best board game conversion for a long, long time.

Magic Boy

(60) Empire – Platform Game £25.99

Not very "magic" at all.

Master Of Orion

(72) MicroProse – Strategy £44.99

A good one for all the accountants out there.

Rebel Assault

(93: Classic) LucasArts – Shoot 'Em Up £49.99

It's *Star Wars*. It's also the most important game to date.

Striker

(55) Elite – Sport £29.99

Another Paul Bodin penalty of the gamesplaying world.

Subwar 2050

(88: Recommended) MicroProse – Simulation £44.99

Easily the best "fun" simulation that MicroProse has produced.

The Labyrinth Of Time

(89: Recommended) Electronic Arts – Adventure £39.99

Beautiful, alluring, a touch slow and a little fussy. A quite superb adventure though.

The Terminator Rampage

(75) Bethesda Softworks – Arcade £39.99

Okay, but once you've seen *Doom*, you'll laugh in *Rampage's* face and spill its pint.

VGA Planets

(70) PAW PBM – Role-Playing Game £24.99

A rather interesting type of role-playing game that takes some time, but is generally worth the wait.

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Campaign

(52) Empire – Strategy £39.99

Dim-witted attempt at simulating armoured action – too buggy to recommend, despite colourful graphics and arcade sequences.

Championship Manager '94

(80: Recommended) Domark – Sport £29.99

It's still the best (just).

Championship Manager Italia

(80: Recommended) Domark – Sport £29.99

It's the best too, just with a few more noughts at the end of the transfer figures.

Combat Classics 2

(50) Empire – Flight Sim Compendium £34.99

Sadly, this compilation contains one classic and two rather second-rate duds.

Companions Of Xanth

(73) Accolade – Adventure £39.99

Awful puns. Questionable humour. Very *Monkey Island*-esque. What more could you want from an adventure?

Cyber Race

(64) Cyberdreams – Racing £44.99

Mildly entertaining for a quick blast, but that's about it.

Fury Of The Furries

(85: Recommended) Mindscape – Puzzle/Platform Game £39.99

A riveting platform puzzler, but not for the easily frustrated.

Gabriel Knight

(92: Classic) Sierra On-Line – Adventure £39.99

Brilliant and frightening offering from Sierra.

Genesis

(83: Recommended) Mindscape – Strategy £34.99

A little bit of *Populous*, a little bit of *Civilisation*.

Hand Of Fate

(82: Recommended) Virgin Interactive Entertainment Adventure £39.99

You've got to hand it to Westwood, this is a bit of a stunner.

Heirs To The Throne

(43) Mirage – Strategy £44.99

If I got this kind of quality from a PC game I'd be blinking well complain.

Indianapolis 500

(65) Hit Squad – Driving £14.99

A once-great giant succumbs to the ravages of time.

Leisure Suit Larry 6

(75) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Adventure £35.99

The best *Larry* yet; but he's getting way past his sell-by date.

Little Devil

(90: Classic) Gremlin Graphics – Puzzle Game £39.99

An excellent puzzle game with wit and flair.

Police Quest 4: Open Season

(78) Sierra On-Line – Adventure £39.99

A thoroughly professional job for those who can think and click at the same time.

Premier Challenge

(78) Tai Chi – Sport £24.99

Design your own game. Boost this score.

Premier Manager 2

(65) Gremlin Graphics – Sport £34.99

It's better, but still too obsessed with interior decorating for my liking.

Shadow Of Darkness

(80: Recommended) Sierra On-Line – Adventure £39.99

A compelling storyline, but dull battle scenes.

The Incredible Toys

(82: Recommended) Dynamix – Puzzle Game £39.99

Zany, silly and highly addictive.

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Archon Ultra

(78) US Gold – Strategy £39.99

More beat 'em up than strategy.

Beneath A Steel Sky

(83: Recommended) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Flight Sim £39.99

Graphically good and pleasingly puzzling jaunt that you'll feel like returning to.

Conspiracy

(67) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Adventure £44.99

Takes all the fun out of *Ruskie* bashing.

D-Day

(38) US Gold – Wargame £35.99

D-Day lies bleeding in the no man's land of wargames.

Daemonsgate

(45) Gametek – Role-Playing Game £29.99

Out-dated, tedious and visually vestigial.

Doom

(96: Classic) id Software – Arcade £34.99

The best arcade game and the best multi-player game ever. *Doom* is the best.

Hired Guns

(77) Psygnosis – Role-Playing Game £44.99

Ishar 2 with robots.

Hot Sound And Vision

(85: Recommended) Interplay – General Interest £44.99

An outstanding collection.

Interplay's 10 Year Anthology

(85: Recommended) Interplay – Compendium £49.99

A cost-effective way to build an instant library of classic games.

Micro Machines

(70) Codemasters – Arcade £29.99

A good two-player game (if you have a decent PC).

Mortal Kombat

(80: Recommended) Virgin Interactive Entertainment

– Beat 'Em Up £29.99

Not as good as the SNES *Street Fighter II*, but the best on the PC.

Nomad

(78) Gametek – Space Strategy £29.99

Good game if you're more into exploring than fighting.

Pinball Fantasies

(80: Recommended) 21st Century Entertainment – Pinball Game £37.95

The meanest machine of them all and a worthy successor to the original *Pinball Dreams*.

Reunion

(80: Recommended) Grandslam – Strategy £TBA

Reunion has something for everyone.

Sim City 2000

(92: Classic) Maxis – Strategy £39.99

Brilliant game that'll make you anally retentive in the extreme.

Star Trek: 25th Anniversary

(86: Recommended) Interplay – Adventure £49.99

A game boldly going where it's been before, just a little more vocally.

Strike Commander (CD)

(86: Recommended) Electronic Arts – Flight Sim £49.99

Superior flight sim, but you need the hardware to match.

The Complete UMS

(58) Mirage – Strategy £44.99

Both classics in their day, the two *UMS* games are a bit too long in the tooth to excite anyone but the real enthusiast.

The Lawnmower Man

(77) Sales Curve Interactive – Arcade £54.99

Excellent presented. Just a little more complexity in the gameplay and it would have been unreservedly recommended.

Winter Olympics

(Right) *IndyCar Racing*: great graphics and playability make this the best ever driving game.

(Far right) *Sam & Max*: The clue's inside the cat. Rip its head off! (Sick, or what?)



Battle Isle 2
(91: Classic) Blue Byte – Strategy £54.99
Without a shadow of a doubt, the strategy game of the year.

Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space (CD)
(95: Classic) Interplay – Strategy – £39.99
A stunning improvement of an already classic game.

Cannon Fodder
(90: Classic) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Arcade/ Strategy £34.99
Great fun for all the wrong and right reasons.

CD-ROM Challenge Pack
(75) Software Toolworks – Compendium £39.99
Reasonable good compilation, but there are better ones around.

Championship Manager For Windows
(79) Domark – Sport £29.99
A wasted opportunity. Not as good as the DOS version.

D/Generation
(85: Recommended) Mindscape – Adventure £19.99
Probably the best game that Windows users have ever played.

Excellent Games
(85: Recommended) Beau Jolly – Various £39.99
Great games at a great price. A compilation not to be missed, including *Populous 2*, *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker*, *Car And Driver* and *Robocod*.

Fantastic Dizzy
(50) Codemasters – Platform Game £9.99
Wrong time. Wrong format. Wrong price.

Gabriel Knight (CD)
(90: Classic)
Sierra On-Line – Adventure £44.99
Brooding, atmospheric thriller.

In Extremis
(67) US Gold – Arcade £37.99
You'll shriek! You'll shout! You'll yawn!

Johnny Quest
(12) Software Business – Arcade/Adventure £29.99
Can basically be summed up in one word. Dreadful.

Megarace
(65) Mindscape – Racing £39.99
A superb demonstration of what can be done graphically with CD-ROM... and how easy it is for gameplay to suffer as a result.

Merchant Prince
(82: Recommended) Mirage – Strategy £44.99
Don't let the dodgy graphics fool you. If you give this game half a chance you'll be hooked.

Microcosm
(70) Psygnosis – Shoot 'Em Up £49.99
Brilliant graphics and excellent sound. Let down by limited gameplay.

NFL Pro League Football
(50) Digital Integration – Sport £39.99
As a play-editor it's okay, but playing the game itself is disappointing.

Privateer: Righteous Fire
(80: Recommended) Electronic Arts – Add-On £19.99
Privateer fans definitely won't be disappointed with this one.

Seawolf
(83: Recommended) Electronic Arts – Simulation £44.99
A highly atmospheric sub sim with a control interface from hell.

Starlord
(70) MicroProse – Strategy £44.99
It could have been excellent. Could have been. Damn!

The Patrician (CD)
(70) Daze Marketing – Strategy £39.99
A good game on disk, slightly better on CD.

The Red Crystal
(43) Mirage – Role-Playing Game £44.99
Don't ask your friends to play this if you want to keep them.

Unnecessary Roughness
(66) Accolade – Sport £39.99
Best described as "alright". It's as good as most American footy sims.

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Bloodnet
(75) MicroProse – Role-Playing Game £39.99
Hindered by outdated implementation, but still well worth a look.

Carriers At War II
(63) Electronic Arts – Strategy £44.99
For die-hard strategy aficionados.

Darkseed
(90: Classic) Cyberdreams – Adventure £44.99
If you have a taste for the macabre, you'll never forget the *Darkseed* affair.

Diggers
(40) Millennium – Puzzle Game £34.99
Mind-numbingly tedious.

Disney Animation Studio
(75) Infogrames – General Interest £99.99
More serious approach with superb sample animations that you can't use!

Dragonsphere
(69) MicroProse – Adventure £39.99
A beautiful adventure game that won't tax your brain too heavily.

Evasive Action
(40) Mindscape – Simulation £34.99
So close, but more bugs than Watergate.

F1
(40) Domark – Sport £29.99
The champions of sport produce yet another world-beater.

Fleet Defender
(86: Recommended) MicroProse – Flight Sim £44.99
Heavyweight flight sim, both helped and hindered by over-clever graphics.

Hanna-Barbera Animation Workshop
(75) Empire – General Interest £49.99
Tries to make everything fun and encourages you to try out other methods of animation.

Hornet Naval Strike Fighter
(80: Recommended) Spectrum Holobyte – Flight Sim £7.99
As that well known saying goes: "If you like *Falcon 3*, you'll just love *Hornet*".

Myst
(67) Electronic Arts – Adventure £44.99
Surreal and atmospheric, if not realistic.

Pacific Strike
(80: Recommended) Electronic Arts – Flight Sim £49.99
Miles better than *Strike Commander* but requires a state-of-the-art, ninja pc.

Pagan: Ultima VII
(78) Electronic Arts – Role-Playing Game £44.99
Without doubt a love/hate relationship for *Ultima* purists.

Ravenloft
(78) US Gold – Role-Playing Game £45.99
SSI has finally got "real" and produced a playable and accessible RPG.

Red Hell
(60) Cyberdreams – Adventure £39.99
The graphics are poor and the control system is dire. Avoid it.

RedShift
(95: Classic) Maris Multimedia Ltd – General Interest £89.00
A stunning program which will be hard to beat.

Sabre Team
(60) Krisalis – Strategy £29.99
This has all been done before, and done much better as well.

Shadowcaster
(70) Electronic Arts – Role-Playing Game £39.99
Considerable enhancements for CD but the gameplay remains the same.

Spaceship Warlock
(70) Reactor/Ubisoft – Adventure £44.99
Very slick, very polished. The game's a bit limited but it's fun all the same.

TFX
(80: Recommended) Ocean – Simulation £44.99
Great game with totally superfluous bells and whistles.

UFO Enemy Unknown
(93: Classic) MicroProse – Strategy £44.99
Brilliantly designed, perfectly implemented and totally absorbing.

Washington DC Scenery
(85: Recommended) Supervision – Flight Sim Add-On £39.99
One of the best flight sim add-ons to date.

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Castles II
(65) Interplay – Strategy £49.95

Interplay usually releases excellent games – this isn't one of them.

Comanche (CD)
(90: Classic) Optima – Flight Sim £49.99
Brilliant action-packed helicopter simulation at a great price on CD.

Companions Of Xanth (CD)
(84: Recommended) Accolade – Role-Playing Game £39.99
Great game on disk. Even better on CD.

Corridor 7
(55) Gametek – Arcade £19.99
Nothing new or exciting.

Detroit
(85: Recommended) Impressions – Strategy £39.99
An intriguing strategy/sim which boasts both originality and playability.

Dragon's Lair
(67) Elite Systems – Adventure £39.99
An interactive cartoon that's more "cartoon" than "interactive".

Eye Of The Storm
(40) Rebellion – Space/Strategy £39.99
Very futuristic, very *Elite* and very, very crap.

Great Naval Battles 2
(86: Recommended) US Gold – Simulation £45.99
SSI cruises easily to the head of the fleet with this simply stunning sim.

Hand Of Fate (CD)
(78) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Adventure £49.99
Good game, shame about the conversion. In this case, more equals less.

Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition
(85: Recommended) Accolade – Sport £19.99
A good golf game at an amazing price.

Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker
(80: Recommended) Hit Squad – Sport £14.99
Dangerously addictive snooker sim.

Lucky's Casino Adventure
(60) Mirage – Card Game £44.99
Challenging, fun, totally addictive but a bit pricey.

Lure Of The Temptress
(55) Hit Squad – Adventure £14.99
Old and fading.

Power Game 2 (CD)
(70) Activision – Simulation £29.99
Worth looking at if you don't have the hardware to run the latest sim.

Robinson's Requiem
(85: Recommended) Daze Marketing – Role-Playing Game £39.99
This is a highly original and addictive "survival sim", which, unfortunately, has some annoying bits.

Sam And Max Hit The Road
(93: Classic) US Gold – Adventure £45.99
Brilliantly original and a highly humorous jaunt.

Sim City Classic
(70) Hit Squad – Strategy £16.99
Still a great game but check out *Sim City 2000* first.

Sim City Enhanced
(82: Recommended) Interplay – Strategy £49.99
Sim City's an excellent game but 50 quid is a bit steep for a few enhancements.

Sleepwalker
(45) Hit Squad – Platform Game £9.99
Third-rate platformer. Stay well away from it.

Space Hulk
(87: Recommended) Electronic Arts – Strategy £39.99
Still a tremendous game, but not as good as the disk-based version.

Summer Challenge & Winter Challenge
(80: Recommended) Accolade – Sport £19.99
Good compilation, great value.

The Horde
(87: Recommended) US Gold – Strategy/Arcade £44.99
Not an original concept but extremely well implemented.

The Rock 'N' Roll Years – The '50s
(70) Supervision – General Interest £24.99
Handy for '50s music lovers or as a reference – but we doubt if it'll get you rockin' round the clock.

The Settlers
(89: Recommended) Blue Byte – Strategy £39.99
A damn fine, engrossing game.

Theatre Of War
(70) Hit Squad – Strategy £12.99
Excellent strategy game and it looks cool too.

UFO
(93: Classic) MicroProse – Strategy £44.99
Incredibly addictive strategy game.

Wembley Rugby League
(66) Audiogenic – Sport £29.99
This manages to be quite an improvement on previous rugby games.

Wolfpack
(60) Optima – Strategy £29.99
Disappointingly average.

World Cup Challenge
(48) Winsport – Sport £29.95
Disappointing, absurdly RAM-hungry and limited in its playing life.

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1942: Pacific Air War
(89: Recommended) MicroProse – Flight Sim £44.99
Two great games – *Carrier Battles* and *Task Force 1942* – in one package. It's a winner!

AI Quadim: The Genie's Curse
(40) US Gold/SSI – Role-Playing Game £35.99
The thinking amoeba's beat 'em up.

Burntime
(43) Max Design – Strategy £39.99
Hey, it's just like being there.

Cool Spot
(80: Recommended) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Platform Game £29.99
Charm and accessibility save it from being strictly seventies-up!

Delta V
(64) Bethesda Softworks – Shoot 'Em Up £45.99
Very fast and pretty stunning to look at, but it won't keep you up into the night.

Dinosaur Detective Agency
(42) Alternative Software – Platform Game £16.99
Cheap – but that's no reason to be cheerful.

Empire Soccer
(57) Empire – Sport £29.99
Let down by the small viewing area, unintelligent player reactions and poor scrolling.

Good To Firm
(50) New Era Software – Sport £29.99
Horse-racing fanatics might get something out of it, but the experience will pall.

International Tennis Open
(88: Recommended) Philips Interactive Media – Sport £44.99
Definitely the new number one seed in the field of PC tennis simulations.

Jack Nicklaus (CD)
(78) Accolade – Sport £16.99
A perfectly serviceable golf game with a good course editor tacked on. Wait for me while I put my golfing shoes on...

Newsweek 3 Globocop (CD)
(0) Mindscape – General Interest £39.99
The most expensive beer mat in the world.

Overlord
(85: Recommended) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Simulation £39.99
An old idea made new with some interesting tweaks.

Pinball Dreams 2
(70) 21st Century Entertainment – Pinball Game £19.99
Not bad at all. There's plenty for pinball wizards to get their flippers into.

Shanghai II: Dragon's Eye
(88: Recommended) Activision – Puzzle Game £29.99
Puzzles galore in this excellent addition to the rather mediocre range of games currently available for Windows.

Sherlock Holmes – The Case Of The Serrated Scalpel
(48) Electronic Arts – Adventure £49.99
Elementary, my dear Watson... and that's the problem.

Simon The Sorcerer (CD)
(89: Recommended) Adventuresoft UK Ltd – Adventure £44.99
A tricky adventure jaunt boosted by excellent talkie bits.

Syndicate (CD)
(92: Classic) Electronic Arts – Strategy £39.99
What a game. What a barg.



(Left) *Theme Park*:
Sim City eat your
heart out.

Tactical Manager

(75) Black Legend – Sport £34.99

An interesting little number with the odd weakness, but several nice ideas.

Theme Park

(93: Classic) Electronic Arts – Strategy £44.99

A highly inventive "business" sim that's fun, fun, fun all the way. Hip hip hoorah for Bullfrog.

Walls Of Rome

(74) Digital Integration – Strategy £16.99

Good, if thin, fun.

World Cup USA '94

(78) US Gold – Sport £32.99

Good features; difference of opinion over the gameplay.

Zool 2

(82: Recommended) Millennium – Platform £34.99

As they say, if you liked Zool, you'll love this.

Issue 18 – September 1994

Beneath A Steel Sky (CD)

(72) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Adventure £39.99

Comic book-style adventure with excellently funny dialogue but lacking any real depth.

D-Day

(40) Impressions – War Game £39.99

A sluggish, unrealistic and bug-ridden attempt at a war game without many redeeming features.

FIFA International Soccer

(70) Electronic Arts – Sport £39.99

Looks and sounds great, but lacks gameplay.

Harpoon II

(70) Electronic Arts – Simulation £44.99

Massive, embarrassingly serious sim. Superb detail, occasionally nail-biting, always sloooooow.

Inherit The Earth – Quest For The Orb

(72) US Gold – Adventure £39.99

A well-thought out gentle little brain teaser for those who fancy a "sensible" game.

International Sensible Soccer

(78) Renegade – Sport £19.99

One of the best on the PC, but still not up to the Amiga version.

Little Devil (CD)

(88: Recommended) Gremlin Graphics – Adventure £34.99

Excellent, original and addictive.

Metal And Lace: The Battle Of The Robo Babes

(35) Megatech – Beat 'em Up £39.99

Totally devoid of any entertainment value whatsoever.

On The Ball

(68) Ascon – Sport £34.99

Too many frills, not enough body.

Outpost

(84: Recommended) Sierra On-Line – Strategy £49.99

A superb game. Addictive if you've got the hardware, hell if you haven't.

Shadow Of The Comet (CD)

(88: Recommended) Infogrames – Adventure £39.99

A worthwhile reworking of a great game, but still very idiosyncratic.

Soccer Kid

(30) Krisalis – Platform Game £29.99

If you want happening platform action, then buy something else.

Theatre Of Death

(35) Psygnosis – Arcade/Strategy £34.99

Below average imitation of an above-average game.

TIE Fighter

(94: Classic) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Space Sim £49.99

Sheer, undiluted quality. Treat yourself to a copy.

Issue 19 – October 1994

74 Wargame Construction Set 2: Tanks!

(90: Classic) SSI – Wargame £39.99

Never mind the 50-ton tanks – this is 50-tons of solid, fire-belching wargame. Absolutely brilliant.

Battle Bugs

(65) Dynamix – Strategy £TBA

A battle game with bugs in it (as opposed to a bugged battle game).

Dark Legions

(85: Recommended) SSI – Strategy £35.99

Wonderfully entertaining animations and game screens with hidden strategic depths.

Heimdall 2

(45) Core – Adventure £39.99

Great game, shame you can't play it.

Hail Cab

(50) Time Warner – Adventure £49.99

It's the same old story. Great graphics, but sadly lacking in gameplay.

IndyCar Racing Expansion Pack

(94: Recommended) Virgin Interactive Entertainment

– Driving £17.99

These tracks are better than the original tracks (if you pretend Phoenix doesn't exist).

Ishar III: The Seven Gates Of Infinity

(50) Simarils – Strategy £39.99

Sum up *Ishar III* in one word? Avoid. Simple as that. The worst of a bunch.

KGB

(65) Hit Squad – Adventure £14.99

Bargain? Maybe. Boring? Definitely.

Kick Off 3

(55) Anco – Sport £29.99

Nice features, but gameplay not up to much.

Manchester United Premier League Champions

(60) Krisalis – Sport £29.99

Sensi revisited (although not as good) with a lot of features thrown in.

Planet Football

(68) Infogrames – Sport £39.99

The World Cup produced a rash of rush releases. This is not one of the best.

Police Quest IV – Open Season

(80: Recommended) Sierra On-Line – Adventure

£44.99

Atmospheric and very entertaining. A bit of a let down at the end, though.

Summer Challenge

(73) Hit Squad – Sport £12.99

Not a bad game by sports sim standards and easy to cheat at, but do you really want another sport sim?

Under A Killing Moon

US Gold – Adventure £59.99

Pigs can fly. Interactive movies do exist. Sort of.

Wing Commander: Armada

(76) Electronic Arts – Flight Sim £44.99

Lots of good ideas stuck together but it doesn't hang quite right.

Issue 20 – November 1994

Alien Legacy

(80: Recommended) Sierra – Strategy £39.99

Space strategy thing which is a bit like *Outpost* without the pretty bits. Daunting at first, but ultimately very rewarding.

Chaos Engine

(80: Recommended) Renegade – Arcade £32.99

A damned good, multi-direction scrolling, shooty thing with lots of big guns and silly characters.

Colonization

(90: Classic) MicroProse – Strategy £44.99

Try to imagine *Civilization* with more depth and better graphics. Well done... you've just imagined *Colonization*.

Cyclemania (CD)

(83: Recommended) Accolade – Arcade £39.99

Extremely competent *Road Rash* 3DO rip-off with lovely digitised backdrops and big motorbikes.

Desert Strike

(78) Gremlin – Arcade £34.99

Conversion of the Mega Drive classic, isometric helicopter, blast 'em up game. The graphics are a bit crap but it's immensely playable.

Doom II

(90: Classic) Virgin Interactive – Arcade £49.99

The sequel to one of the best games ever. New graphics, a new gun and new monsties-wonsties. Miss it at your peril.

Inferno (CD)

(88: Recommended) Ocean – Space/Sim £44.99

Eagerly awaited game from DID. Lots of big space ships and silly looking aliens. One of the better space combat games.

KA-50 Hokum

(85: Recommended) Virgin – Simulation £39.99

Without a doubt the very best helicopter simulator money can buy. Something for the propeller heads out there (yes, we know you're out there...).

NHL Hockey 95 (CD)

(91: Classic) EA – Sports/Arcade £34.99

A new version of the top-down scrolly, ice hockey game from EA. Basically the same as the original (reviewed issue seven) but with new stats.

PGA 486 (CD)

(91: Classic) Electronic Arts – Sports £44.99

Gorgeous looking, solid playing, tasty little golf game. One of the best on the PC so far.

Pinball Dreams CD

(70) 21st Century – Arcade £39.99

Eight wonderfully designed, smoothly scrolling pinball tables. Why is it on CD?

'Cause there are lots of pointless rendered bits, that's why.

System Shock

(95: Classic) EA/Origin – RPG £44.99

Pant-wettingly fantastic, cyberpunk, RPG thing. All hail *System Shock*, that shalt be king hereafter (until *System Shock II* comes out, that is).

Issue 21 – December 1994

Alone in the Dark II CD

(93: Classic) Infogrames – Adventure £44.99

A sequel that is noticeably better than the original and with some serious CD enhancements. What a refreshing change.

Dawn Patrol

(80: Recommended) Empire – Flight simulation

£44.99

A gorgeous looking svga ww1 flight sim with a bit of a different idea behind it... it's an interactive book apparently.

Dreamweb

(74) Empire – RPG £44.99

Cyberpunk RPG with lots of violence and a shagging scene that has now become infamous.

Ecstasica

(93: Classic) Psygnosis – Adventure £44.99

An utterly brilliant *Alone in the Dark*-like with ellipsoid-generated characters and lots of pert buttocks.

FIFA CD

(76) Electronic Arts – Sports £39.99

A smart-looking footy game that just falls short of being an absolute belter.

Little Big Adventure

(93: Classic) Electronic Arts – Adventure £44.99

A truly amazing adventure with pretty graphics and weird French gameplay. Gobsmaacking.

Magic Carpet

(96: Classic) Electronic Arts – Shoot 'em up £44.99

The sequel to one of the best games ever – and we do mean ever. New graphics, a new gun and new monsties-wonsties. Miss it at your peril.

Project X

(76) Team 17 – Shoot 'em up £19.99

A very competent and nicely low-priced little shoot 'em up.

Rise of the Robots

(88: Recommended) Mirage – Beat 'em up £44.99

Possibly the best beat 'em up on the PC so far with some excellent rendered sprites.

Space Simulator

(75) Microsoft – Simulator £39.99

A huge simulation of man's quest for space that is a little too ambitious for its own good.

Star Crusader

(60) Gametech – Shoot 'em up £39.99

Basically this is a poor man's *Wing Commander* with some nice CD bits.

Transport Tycoon

(94: Classic) MicroProse – Strategy £44.99

One of the best strategy games around and a more than worthy sequel to *Railroad Tycoon*.

Total Carnage

(74) ICE – Shoot 'em up £27.99

Good challenging fun and a more than competent conversion of the original arcade machine.

Issue 22 – January 1995

Aces of the Deep

(90: Classic) Dynamix/Sierra – £39.99

Graphics, gameplay, sound and atmo combine to make this the best sub game available.

All New World of Lemmings

(78) Digital Integration – £39.99

If you like all the other *Lemmings* games, you'll like this one too.

Armored Fist

(86: Recommended) US Gold/Novologic £44.99

Comanche on wheels. Er, tracks. You know what I mean.

Creature Shock

(78) Virgin – £49.99

An engrossing, atmospheric 3D adventure game. Great graphics, absorbing levels, but lousy soundtrack.

CyberWar

(55) SCI – £49.99

It looks amazing. The gameplay isn't.

Dark Sun II

(80: Recommended) Mindscape – £44.99

Love it for its brains not for its looks.

Discworld

(96: Classic) Psygnosis – £49.99

Discworld is possibly the best point-and-click adventure game ever made.

Front Page Sports Baseball

(85: Recommended) Sierra – £44.99

It takes all the best bits from all the best games and ends up being the best.

Klik 'n' Play

(88: Recommended) Europress – £39.99

Neat intuitive, and loads of fun.

Novastorm

(40) Psygnosis – £44.99

Repeat ad nauseam: "Pretty graphics doth not a game make."

Power Drive

(50) US Gold – £39.99

30 whole points off for no two-player mode. Sod off *Power Drive*.

Quarantine

(80: Recommended) Gametek – £39.99

An excellent blast and it looks good too.

Retribution

(45) Gremlin Interactive – £39.99

Not only is it a below average shoot 'em up, it has pretensions too.

US Navy Fighters

(90: Classic) Electronic Arts – £44.99

If it had a multi-player facility, I'd give it 100. But it hasn't, so I won't.

Warcraft

(75) Interplay – £39.99

Good, simple, addictive strategy game.

Issue 23 – February 1995

Alone in the Dark 3

(95 – Classic) Infogrames – Adventure £44.99

The mega-stonkingly weird and wonderful final chapter in the *Alone in the Dark* trilogy.

Cannon Fodder 2

(74) Virgin Interactive – Arcade/Strategy £34.99

Just more of the same or is *Cannon Fodder 2* a significant improvement? Sensible returns with more "fun with a gun".

Commander Blood

(81 – Recommended) Mindscape – Adventure £44.99

It's French, and guess what? It's weird. Very weird. We try not to get at them for it... but this is just plain mad.

Cyberia

(80 – Recommended) Interplay – Adventure/Shoot

'em up £49.99

A contender for the "Best-looking game of 1994" award. Tastier than treacle

(Right) *Alone in the Dark 3*: More Carnby, cobwebs, murder, mystery and mayhem.



Kyrandia 3

(87 - Recommended) Virgin - Adventure £44.99
Westwood's *Fables and Fiends* series makes it to number three, and this time you get to play the bad guy!

Lion King

(71) Virgin - Platform game £29.99

The smash-hit movie turns into a reasonable-ish platform game. *PC Zone* good tip number one (in a series of...) - just pretend your PC is a Mega Drive.

NASCAR Racing

(84 - Recommended) Virgin - Racing Sim £44.99
Payrus follows up *IndyCar* with the popular American sport of driving round and round in circles.

Noctropolis

(79) Electronic Arts - Adventure £44.99

For a change Electronic Arts goes all weird, gothic and horrific in this unusual super-hero adventure.

Ultimate Body Blows

(78) Team 17 - Beat 'em up £29.99

An Amiga conversion from Team 17. Don't be put off by that, though - it's actually quite good.

Voyeur

(40) Interplay - Adventure £39.99

Not as pervy as people think. Yes, there are suspenders and braiziers in it but no nudity and no naughtiness (well, not much, at least not enough to satisfy the male staff on PC Zone).

Wing Commander 3

(62) Electronic Arts - Flight Sim £59.99

Four million dollars, Luke Skywalker and a well-known porn actress - definitely a potentially interesting situation if ever there was one.

Issue 24 - March 1995

Aladdin

(70) Virgin - Arcade £29.99

He leaps tall buildings, cuts through baddies with his scimitar and wears pointy slippers. He's Aladdin - who else.

Dark Forces

(95 - Classic) LucasArts/Virgin - Action adventure £54.99

The empire is finally Doom-ed, but is it better than the real thing? We bring you the first review of the game everyone's itching to get their hands on, in a special word exclusive, courtesy of LucasArts and Virgin.

Doom Clones: Head to Head

(55) Merit - Action adventure £39.99

We put Merit's *Dr Radiaki* up against *Virtuoso* from Elite and run for cover (well, *Doom*, actually).

Heil: A Cyberpunk Thriller

(25) Gametek - Adventure £39.99

It is: it isn't. If it's really this bad then start praying for forgiveness immediately.

Kick Off 3: European Challenge

(70) Anco - Sport £29.99

The last *Kick Off* was an absolute nightmare. Have Anco finally got it together in Europe?

King's Quest VII

(93 - Classic) Sierra - Adventure £44.99

The latest point and click extravaganza from the Roberta Williams' school of mush-wushy, cutesy-wutesyness.

Knights of Xentar

(10) Megatech - Adventure £49.99

A plentiful lack of Beat 'em up action strides onto the PC, courtesy of Megatech. Ouch!

Menzoheranzan

(68) Mindscape - RPG £TBA

Not a tasty lozenge that promises to clear your stuffy nose and soothe your sore throat, but a rather ordinary RPG from SSI.

Metaltech: Earthsiege

(87 - Recommended) Sierra - Simulation £39.99

Go stomping mad in this spectacular HERC-fest from Sierra. Just one thing though, why have extravagant HERCs that walk when the terrain is perfectly flat?

Realms of Arkania: Star Trail

(85 - Recommended) US Gold - RPG £44.99

The sequel to the keenly received *Blade of Destiny* finally makes it onto CD-ROM. Hip, hip...

SuperKarts

(82 - Recommended) Virgin - Action £TBA

The most fun you can have with your bum only an inch off the ground, when wearing a crash helmet and clad in brightly-coloured leather.

TIE Fighter: Defender of the Empire

(73) LucasArts - Space/Action £19.99

Two new missions and a new ship. What will they think of next?

Wings of Glory

(78) Electronic Arts - Flight Sim £TBA

Chocks away as Origin reach for the skies to do battle with the Hun, dastardly chaps with 'taches and every other WWI flight sim ever created.

Issue 25 - April 1995

BC Racers

(62) Core Design - Racing sim £34.99

Chuck Rock meets Super Mario Kart. Unfortunately, the clash of these two mega-games hasn't proven to be that good. Oops.

Big Red Adventure

(70) Core Design - Adventure £39.99

The follow up to *Nippon Safes*... arrgh, keep it away! Hang on a minute, though, this looks like it could actually be quite good.

Bioforge

(95 Classic) Electronic Arts - Action adventure £44.99

The first "real" interactive movie? Or is *Bioforge* just another game that looks like *Alone in the Dark*?

Descent

(94 Classic) Interplay - 3D shoot 'em up £44.99

Could this be the game to finally knock *Doom* off the top spot? The fabulous 3D game from Interplay arrives at last.

Heretic

(78) id/Raven - 3D shoot 'em up £39.99

"Doom in tights." Can a fighting fantasy version of the greatest game of all time, ever, ever, really be better? Er, no.

Iron Assault

(57) Virgin - 3D shoot 'em up £34.99

A distinctly average "big robot" game joins the ranks of other distinctly average "big robot" games on the PC.

Legions

(65) Mindscape - Strategy war game £34.99

This is definitely one for the Hex-heads, this is. It's intense, ludicrously strategic and it runs under Windows. Eek!

Lost Eden

(76) Virgin - Adventure £34.99

Cryo's dinosaur game finally arrives a year after it was unveiled. *Jurassic Park* meets *Dragon Lore*.

Issue 26 - May 1995

Atari Action Pack

(50) Activision - VCS Atari Compilation £24.99

This compilation includes lots of really ancient Activision Atari VCS games, all for Windows and all on one CD. It's like a time machine that takes you somewhere a bit crap!

Cyclones

(78) Mindscape - Adventure £44.99

Yet another *Doom* clone - but not a bad one by any means - from the team that brought us both *Heretic* and *Shadowcaster*.

Football Glory

(60) Kompart - Sports £TBA

Q: When is *Sensible Soccer* not really *Sensible Soccer*?

A: When it's a not-quite-so-good copy called *Football Glory*.

Guilty

(58) Psygnosis - Adventure £39.99

Sequel-ola. *Guilty* is the follow up to the awful *Innocent Until Caught*, and it's significantly better, but still not brilliant.

Jungle Strike

(79) Gremlin - Shoot 'em up £39.99

Another sequel... this time, the sequel to *Desert Strike*. But this shoot 'em up is bigger, more varied and harder than the original.

NBA Live

(90 Classic) Electronic Arts - Sport £44.99

EA Sports awakens from a period of dormancy

with this absolutely corking basketball arcade game - the best of its type around.

Renegade

(75) SSI - Space Sim £44.99

SSI's *Tie Fighter/Wing Commander* wannabe in glorious VGA. A surprisingly playable space warfare game.

Rise of the Triad

(82 Classic) US Gold and PD Selections - Adventure £39.95

Some love it and some hate it... but of the *Doom*-likes, this is one of the best.

Super Frog

(40) Team 17 - Platform £19.99

A platform game with a frog in it... Uh-huh. Okay.

Tank Commander

(60) Domark - Simulation £39.99

A budget-style tank game at full price. If you've got more money than sense, you'll really love it!

Woodruff and the Schnibble of Azimuth

(75) Sierra - Adventure £39.99

A weird adventure game from Sierra. A wonderfully deceptive adventure with comic-book feel!

X-COM

(94 Classic) MicroProse - Strategy £44.99

The first *X-COM* was absolutely brilliant. This sequel is even better still.

Issue 27 - June 1995

Blind Date

(25) Domark - Adventure £39.99

Chris had a jolly splendid time reviewing last month's "interactive-try-to-get-laid-simulator". What will the softies come up with next?

Full Throttle

(92 - Classic) LucasArts/Virgin - Adventure £49.99

Hooray for LucasArts adventures. Big, tough guy, biker stuff this time. Splendid.

Flight of the Amazon Queen

(50) Warner Interactive - Adventure £39.99

This game from Warner Interactive is desperately trying to be a LucasArts adventure but failing quite miserably. It's naff.

Hardball 4

(83 Recommended) Accolade/Warner - Arcade/Sports £39.99

Returning May's theme of "sequels", Warner Interactive brings us the fourth *Hardball*. Surely Warner have to call it quits now?

High Seas Trader

(62) Impressions - Strategy/Simulation £39.99

Affectionately referred to as "High Street Trader" in the *PC Zone* office, this is the latest strategy offering from Impressions.

Magic Carpet: Hidden Worlds

(80 Recommended) Bullfrog - Arcade/Strategy £19.99

A sort of add-on thingy for *Magic Carpet* with lots of snow. The trouble is though, it's completely and utterly, stupidly, bloody hard.

Pyrotechnica

(69) Psygnosis - 3D Shoot 'em up £29.99

Very poor *Descent*-wannabe from Psygnosis. Fortunately though, it's considerably cheaper.

Psycho Pinball

(78) Codemasters - Arcade £44.99

Pinball from Codemasters. Some nice tables. Some nice music. Sorted.

Silpstream 5000

(88 Recommended) Gremlin Int. - Arcade/Shoot 'em up £39.99

Three-dimensional-fabby-whizzo racing/shooting/ speedy thing from Gremlin. Splendid stuff, and better than boring, run-of-the-mill racing games.

Star Trek: TNG - "A Final Unity"

(94 Classic) MicroProse - Adventure £49.99

Yes, it may have a ridiculously long title, but this is, without a doubt, the best game to bear the *Star Trek* name so far.

Super Streetfighter II Turbo

(90 Classic) Gametek - Beat 'em up £39.99

It would seem that last month's theme was "games with very long names". Gametek's *SSF/II Turbo II* is one of the best arcade conversions ever seen on the PC.

Ticconderoga

(78) Mindscape - Naval/strategy £44.99

Silly name but a damn fine naval strategy game. Lovely graphics and splendid CD bits.

Virtua Chess

(85 Classic) Titus - Strategy £44.99

Snazzy 3D SVGA chess thingy from Titus, France. This one's different looking and with a ninja bastard brainbox.

Warriors

(85 Classic) Mindscape - Beat 'em up £39.99

What, yet another beat 'em up? Anyone would think there's a shortage of 'em or something.

Issue 28 - July 1995

1830

(68) US Gold - Board Game £39.99

Set in the early years of American colonisation, a sort of *Railroad Tycoon* meets *Risk*. Strictly for those of trainspotter persuasion.

Alex Dampier Pro Hockey

(66) Merit Software - Sports Sim £39.95

Ice hockey sim with *FIFA*-style viewpoint, but impossible control system, and comes no where near *NHL Hockey '95*.

Alien Breed: Tower Assault

(81) Team 17 - Shoot 'Em Up £29.99

The sequel to *Alien Breed*, but superior to the PC version of the original. Great graphics and frenzied, addictive shooty action.

Brett Hull Hockey '95

(73) Accolade/Warner - Sports Sim £39.99

Top-down ice hockey game, which doesn't match the king of ice hockey sims, *NHL Hockey '95*, but betters *Alex Dampier Pro Hockey '95*.

Chaos Control

(40) Philips/Infogrames - Shoot 'Em Up £39.99

Unbelievably terrible futuristic FMV shoot 'em up that was passable on CD-i, but should never have seen the light of day on PC.

Command & Conquer

(95 - Classic) Virgin - Strategy adventure £44.99

Dune 2 meets *Cannon Fodder* in this brilliant game of soldiers Excellent cut-scenes and a superb multi-player option.

Daedalus Encounter

(58) Virgin - Adventure £44.95

Interactive movie game that fails to make the grade - and, for what it's worth, stars Tia Carrere, the babe from *Wayne's World*.

Dominus

(42) US Gold - Strategy Game £39.99

Fantasy battle game with good graphics and comprehensive interface but lacking that vital ingredient - gameplay.

Frontier: First Encounters

(78) Gametek - Space Strategy Sim £39.99

Disappointing enhanced version of *Elite II*, which not only doesn't add much to *Frontier*, but is also bugged to jiggery.

Jagged Alliance

(72) Mindscape - Strategy Game £39.99

Risk meets *Syndicate* in this strategy battle jaunt. Not groundbreaking or particularly original but quite good fun all the same.

Loadstar

(35) BMG Interactive - Shoot 'Em Up £34.99

Dreadful FMV shoot 'em up not worth the paper its manual was printed on. A wax banana has more gaming possibilities.

Machivelli The Prince

(89) MicroProse - Strategy Game £44.99

Colonization-style sim packed with political intrigue, assassinations, plagues, pirates and a unique play by e-mail feature.

Man Utd: The Double

(71) Krisalis - Sports Sim £29.99

The best *Man United* game yet but still not a patch on the *Sensible Soccer*s of this world.

Sim Tower

(70) Maxis - Strategy Game £39.99

Sim City viewed from the side with the emphasis on tower blocks, but not as addictive or humorous - and the presentation is dire.

Virtual Pool

(91 - Classic) Interplay - Sports Sim £44.99

Superb gameplay and 3D graphics - complete with a multi-player network option - about as close to a game of pool in the pub as you can get.



Here it is... the new and improved WordProcessor bit. Tell us what you think, rant about stuff and, most importantly, give us your opinions on the "new look" PC Zone.

Star Trek: The Truth

Hearty congrats to Mr McCandless. I'd like to take this opportunity to be sickeningly simpering and congratulate David for summing up all the reasons why the old series of *Star Trek* was crap. I'd also like to thank him for producing an excellent acronym... The Old Series - TOS. Brilliant.

Shellgrip

(taken from the PC Zone CIX conference)

*I'm sure Macca's ego is nicely swollen now. Just to make him feel even better why not go and buy his book *Trekmaster* - available from all good bookshops (we think - the tight git hasn't given us any copies anyway).*

Weird And French (Believe It Or Not)

This letter has been reprinted verbatim for added comedic value.

Mr Englishmen who can't stand French people, We don't give a damn!

It appears that many English people writing to *PcZone* have a grudge against foreigners and especially against French. Some of them even lose their time making awful drawings or creating small silly games such as "Kill a frog" (To Mr Leatham from Devon: If your game is so good, why don't you sell it to a game company to compete with *Doom*? If it isn't why don't you sit on it?)

Such an attitude may have two objectives:

- they try to be funny and make French laugh. Then they have to make up their mind (if they get one; by chance), it's a failure.
- they don't try to make anybody laugh except themselves. In that case they won. Yeah they won the stupidity first prize. Why are they so angry with French or foreigners? Maybe they suffer from inferiority or Oedipus complex, or maybe it's related to being a boiled peas addict. (By the way, as England was conquered by French people in 1066, these French-opponents may be of French origin.)

The few foreigners who read *PcZone* are fortunately fully aware that such people do represent a minority.

Concerning the Editor pissing out the

French people; as long as he piss out everybody (including english people) it's okay. Now Mr Editor you can freely make your job "shoot the first Mr editor".

J Meyrueis, Toulon, France

"Pissed out" Je regrette rien.

Discworld Sorted

After reading your enthusiastic review of *Discworld*, and being a fan of the books, I decided to buy a copy of the game from my local GAME store in Coventry. Unfortunately, though, when I got the thing home, I found that the sound didn't work correctly. I could get all of the music but absolutely no speech! PANIC! Lots of dumb ideas ensued as I tried to work out if my CD drive was faulty, or I'd gotten myself a faulty disc. After some experimentation I came to the conclusion that it may be a fault with the sound driver software.

After various trips back to GAME and a number of conversations with the Psynosis technical support department I was eventually offered the solution of swapping my CD version for an HD version. Gee thanks.

After more calls I finally learned that there were problems with the sound drivers (there was a very helpful chap at Psynosis) and that new discs would be sent out as soon as they had been produced.

Not wanting to wait I then looked into solving the problem myself. Looking at the sound driver files that had been installed on the PC I realised that I had seen similar files in other games and demos. The hunt was on. Scanning and installing numerous demos I eventually found the correct drivers on the April 95 PC Zone cover CD as part of the *Inferno* demo.

Success! My *Discworld* problem is now solved and it's all thanks to PC Zone.

Kevin Bly, Coventry

*I'm sure that there are a lot of people who will be very grateful for this snippet of advice. The problems caused by *Discworld* have been very annoying for a high percentage of punters who bought it, and the anger that it has caused has only been overshadowed by *Frontier: First Encounters*. Speaking of which...*

First Encounters... Continued

I'd like to agree with the views of Barry Gilbert in last month's WordProcessor. *Frontier: First Encounters* was potentially one of the best games of the year, but the bugs and problems just arsed everything up. Power to PC Zone for

Write to PC Zone

There are numerous ways to transmit your delightful scrawlings to PC Zone. You can either use the traditional method, oft-described as "snail-mail" by the pretentious technocrats of this world...

WordProcessor

PC Zone

Dennis Publishing

19 Bolsover Street

London

W1P 7HJ

Or you can be really hip, trendy and cyber and do a whacky e-mail thing...

CompuServe: PC ZONE 100142, 2152

CIX: PC Zone @ CIX.compulink.co.uk

printing an honest review and editorial that actually exposed this farce.

B Hart, Cambs

Frontier: First Encounters is a pile of shite. I took mine back for a refund and the GAME manageress said she wished she'd never heard of the game for all the trouble it was causing her.

Charly

(taken from the PC Zone CIX conference)

I WANT BRABEN'S E-MAIL ADDRESS!!!

Popeye

(taken from the PC Zone CIX conference)

From the vibe we've been picking up on, there are an awful lot of people who are not only pissed off with Gametek for providing something that doesn't work, but also with David Braben. We have been assured on numerous occasions that the problems with the game had something to do with things going wrong just before it went to duplication. Although it's not confirmed, we reckon that someone boobed and sent the wrong version of the game and it was this naff, bugged and generally screwed up version that ended up being manufactured.

Culky Corner

Wot no Mr Cursor in ECTS shock! Colin Culky? Didn't think much of the *Cyberia* video, though.

Dogmeat

(taken from the PC Zone CIX conference)

I thought the Culky vid was COOL - hope this is gonna be a regular monthly feature.

Gevenett

(taken from the PC Zone CIX conference)

Who the hell is Culky? He's absolutely unbelievable! This has to be one of the best things I have ever seen on a



Toilets In Doom

Last month we printed a letter questioning why there aren't any toilets in *Doom*. In true *PC Zone* fashion we have since had numerous letters from deranged weirdos claiming to have found them...

Toilets in *Doom*! I've seen a wc on the second level but after going for my camera I found to my amazement that the pc had actually switched itself off. How strange!

Tom Bacon, Croydon

Really! How sad.

Regarding the letter from Ewan Loughlin, July 95 issue. I have found the toilets in *Doom*. They are well hidden, but as you asked, here is a screen shot, sort of. It's poor quality and in BMP format because I didn't know how to grab screens within *Doom*, so I just ran it from Windows and pressed Print Screen. It's a bit blurry, but you can see, without a shadow of a doubt, that it's an Imp having a shit. He's a tad pissed off too - perhaps he doesn't like to be disturbed. I suppose I was a bit rude, not knocking and all.

Go on then, what's the special prize? A pat on the back? A warm feeling of achievement? I'd be quite happy just to see my name in print. If you do print the screen shot, could you just put my name at the top in big red letters? Better still, rather than fill a page with a Windows logo, fill it with my name instead. That would surprise me. Just a few other points...

● To Ewan: is it the old Irish woman that Kevin undyingly loves?

● No, the Editor doesn't look girly.

● Mr Cursor. He's fantastic, so I'd like to send a great big "fuck off" to everyone who's been complaining about him. But

what's his real name? And is that bloke with all the glasses really him?

Tris Harvey-Rice, Chippin Norton

PS. If you do print this letter please note: Harvey-Rice is a double-barrelled surname, Harvey is not my Christian name. (It's Michael.)

PPS. Don't s'pose you could print my mate Pat Hales' name could you? He's even sadder than me and seeing his name in print would send him into reels of ecstasy.

Yes, thank you. But if your name is Michael why do you sign yourself as Tris? At first we thought you were just confused, but after some discussion we have come to the conclusion that you are quite clearly mad.

In answer to your questions...

● I have no idea.

● Thank you.

● Yes, that's him. Splendid, isn't he?

Thank you for the picture, we appreciate it enormously. Now go and get a life (and your friend).

Toilets in *Doom*! During a hack and slash session through one of the millions of WADs, I happened to chance upon a rather small but perfectly formed WAD and discovered the very thing you crave. Yes! A *Doom* toilet - and here's a screen shot to prove it.

Leonard Crush, Margate

Well, there's absolutely no doubt, it's definitely captured people's imagination. Tis true... there are bogs in *Doom*. Now then, we bet you can't find a labrador puppy scurrying around with the loo roll.

(Above left)
Tris Harvey-Rice
discovers an Imp
"on the job".

(Above)
Leonard Crush says
he can provide this
particular WAD if
anyone wants it.

magazine cover disc. Yet again *PC Zone* manages to do something that no one else has thought of. The mag's funny and now the CD is as well.

P Everett, Bristol

I've just seen the Cully video on the *Star Trek* CD cover disc. It is truly a work of comedy genius. Brilliant. When are we going to see him again?

Chris Hubbard, Cambridge

It seems that our chum Cully has gone down extremely well with absolutely everyone. To say that he has achieved "cult" status would be something of an understatement. We have received phone calls, e-mails and letters about his exploits and virtually all of them have demanded that we feature him more. In the words of our new hero "Ol' Cully likes a bit of fan-

mail". If you check out this month's CD you'll find another vid... Cully goes to *Electronic Arts*. Smart.

Rampant Man Water

I'm just writing in about Duncan MacDonald and his outrageous *Sim* Tower review last month. Okay, so he doesn't agree with what some "rampant man hater" on the TV has to say about tower blocks and penises, and what a boring world it would be if we all agreed on everything. Frankly, to end his derogatory and stereotypical remarks with "stupid cow" annoyed me; it reeks of tabloidistic dismissiveness, like "what are women doing on TV anyway? Get back to scrubbing the kitchen floor."

J Murphy, Dyfed

Whoah. Fair enough, and we take the point - but as you say, people don't have to agree on everything. The piece on TV that was trying to imply that tower blocks were a sign of male dominance over society, or whatever it was trying to say, was quite clearly antagonistic. To be honest it has very little to do with the review... if anything I rather got the impression that he just wanted to get a knob gag into the article.

Hell In A Handbasket...

Why are all the latest games based on immoral people in depressing scenarios? *BioForge*, *Quarantine*, *Ultima VIII* to name but a few. Is it just me, or are the morals of current games somewhat different to what they used to be? Let me give you an example: In *Ultima VI* the purpose of the game is to unite two nations, the

Gargoyles and the Humans into one, big happy family. In *Ultima VII Part 1* you remove the Guargian, a quintessential evil, from Britannia. Nothing wrong with those two. *Ultima VII Part 2* is similar to *Part 1* except you bed three women and your companions go on an insane killing spree and murder 95% of the population. Virtuous? I think not. *Ultima VIII* - hmm, let me see. You start off by lying and stealing from everyone you meet, sometimes dabbling in the occult or murder. Next you steal magical powers from the four great Titans which results in them torturing the people of the land with earthquakes, wind and rain. Finally, having bled the land dry, you teleport off Britannia without a backward thought.

Edward Turkington, Bucks

Good point. And as a response I could make some kind of deep social comment with regard to the decline of moralistic standards in modern society and the resulting reflection of this in interactive entertainment. If I did, however, I would quite clearly be talking complete and utter bollocks.

Politically Correct

I don't really want to get dragged into the ongoing brouhaha over adult stuff, porn, swearing, bimbos or whatever because I enjoy the mag's irreverence and don't take the rest too seriously. I work for a PC (politically correct) local authority and I have enough of the "you can't say this, you can't think that" kind of stuff from them. In my PC (Pentium - yay!) leisure time I reserve

the right to enjoy what I like without having my attitudes checked up on and questioned all the time. Which leads me on to the point of my letter, namely Charlie Brooker apologising to the French! This is good news for two reasons. Firstly I actually like the French, their food, country and culture, so I was actually getting a little cheesed off with the ongoing abuse. Secondly, you are now touting for a new target for mindless/mindful abuse and provide a helpful list of suggestions. From this list I'd like to encourage you to give some stick to Americans and Shane Richie, both highly deserving of extensive ridicule, jibes, taunts and offensive diatribes. I'd also like to give a Chinese burn to all the narrow minded arseholes out there who can't accept that other people enjoy different things from them and want us to think their way. And that Chinese burn comes with a free slap to those who want to silence Mr Cursor.

Stig Chaos, Derbyshire

There's a definite trend towards Shane Richie victimisation at the moment. Having examined the "hate mail" letters that we asked for last month along with a few bits of e-mail, it would seem that he is definitely winning. Fortunately (or unfortunately, depending on how you look at it) the Dominion Theatre where dear Mr Richie is treading the boards is only about half a mile from the PC Zone dungeon... Hah hah, what fun we could have. Anyway, if any of you don't know what good ol' Shane looks like, here are some pictures of him. Hunky, huh? Z

John's bit on the side...

In keeping with the "new look" PC Zone I'm now going to have my bit tucked away up

here in the letters page. As ever, it'll be the bit where I vent the frustrations of the month or attempt to make some kind of comment on the overall state of PC games at the moment... or something like that.



The most important thing at this stage, though, is to ask you all for your opinion on what you have in your hands. PC Zone has been pretty much the same for the past 28 months and we thought that it was now time to make some changes. Obviously we're all incredibly happy with the result, but we want to make sure that we provide a magazine that is absolutely perfect for you. PC Zone is different from all the other games mags out there and readers' opinions and suggestions are very important to us. If you've got anything to say, whether it's good or bad, write to us at the usual address or e-mail us or something.

More Bloody Doom

As you can see from the bit on the cover and the review on page 62, *Doom* is back... again. Now, I'm aware that we're thought of as the "Doom magazine", so I'm sure it's surprised you all to find that we've been so negative. In fact, those of you with very long memories will recall that we gave *Doom 2* a bit of a kicking as well.

I'm sure you've all read the *Ultimate Doom* review by now, and it's quite clear that Macca, the UberMeisterFragKing, is far from impressed. To be honest this is an opinion reflected by pretty much everyone here at PC Zone. Yes, we accept that, comparatively, not many people actually own a full version of the original *Doom* (most people seem to have *Doom 2* and a shareware version of *Doom*) and the new episode in theory is a great idea. However, to be brutally honest, there's nothing in *Ultimate Doom* that you can't really get from a decent WAD.

Think about it: we've already put more than 1,000 levels out on CD, so if that isn't enough, why would anyone really want to fork out £30 for one more episode? It seems a bit daft really. Anyway, in keeping with tradition I want to know what people think of us slagging it. Last time I invited you all to either commend the comment or call me something beginning with "w" and rhyming with "anchor", but I won't do that again 'cos I'm still getting letters of complaint.

SHANE
RICHIE
WE HATE
YOU!

"REACHING THE PARTS OTHER WEST END MUSICALS FAIL TO TOUCH... GREASE LEAVES YOU IN HIGH DELIGHT"

"A MEGA-BOPPING HIT"

"FAST, FURIOUS AND THRILLING... AND FUN, FUN, FUN"

"USHERETTES WERE HAVING TO RESTRAIN THE AUDIENCE (INCLUDING YOUR CRITIC) FROM DANCING IN THE AISLES"

"A SMASH HIT"

"STILL THE ONE THAT I WANT"

is the word

UNCONFIRMED, UNFOUNDED RUMOURS ABOUT WINDOWS 95

RUMOUR NO.1: WINDOWS '95 WILL SCAN YOUR HARD DRIVE FOR PIRATED SOFTWARE, THEN REPORT ITS FINDINGS TO MICROSOFT VIA YOUR MODEM...

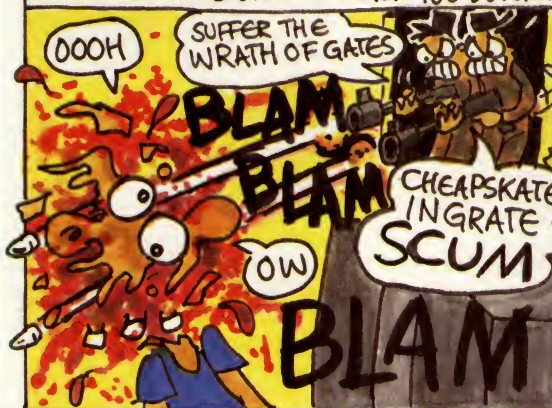


... IT WILL THEN DISTRACT YOUR ATTENTION BY DISPLAYING A SERIES OF 256-COLOUR BITMAPS OF CELEBRITIES PERFORMING LEWD SEXUAL ACTS...



CHARLIE BROOKER™

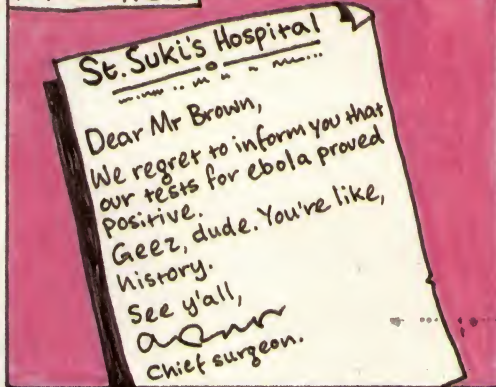
...JUST LONG ENOUGH FOR THE MICROSOFT ARMED RESPONSE UNIT TO TRACK YOU DOWN...



RUMOUR NO.2: WINDOWS '95 HAS BEEN DEVELOPED IN CONJUNCTION WITH A LEADING U.S. FOOD COMPANY - AND IT DISPLAYS SUBMINAL MESSAGES EVERY 10 MINUTES...



RUMOUR NO.3: WINDOWS '95 WILL AUTOMATICALLY "AMERICANIZE" WHATEVER YOU TRY TO TYPE...



RUMOUR NO.4: WINDOWS '95 WILL BE CLEVERER THAN YOU ARE...



RUMOUR NO.5: WINDOWS '95 HAS FANGS, SCALES, AND LIVES IN A CAVE...



RUMOUR NO.6: WINDOWS '95 WILL PROVIDE YOUR BOSS WITH A DETAILED REPORT OUTLINING JUST HOW LONG YOU PLAYED "SOLITAIRE" FOR, WHEN YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE DOING THAT VITAL REPORT INSTEAD.



RUMOUR NO.7: WINDOWS '95 WILL DISPLAY THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE AT 11:59 PM ON THE 31st DECEMBER 1999...



RUMOUR NO.8: WINDOWS '95 WILL ACTUALLY BE RELEASED THIS YEAR.





IF BY ANY CHANCE YOU READ LAST month's column, you may recall that I accidentally turned my crap 486 game station into an advanced form of Artificial Intelligence. (I dropped a matchstick on to one of the inside bits and suddenly the thing was conversing with me, in text form, on the monitor.) It reckons it's party to a zillion and one money-making schemes, and I'm going to share the latest one with you in a minute.

But before that, I just want to have a quick, five-minute chinwag about the latest enhancement in easily portable storage mediums... namely the Digital Video Disk.

I've just finished reading a magazine article about them, you see, which was all about how double-sided digital video disks can hold ten gigabytes, but are rather expensive to mass produce. On the other hand, the single-sided ones, thanks to a multi-layered something-or-other, hold almost as much, but are comparatively inexpensive. "It's going to be a case of the VHS versus the Betamax again," said the article, quite rightly. But throughout the feature, I wasn't really worrying about the consumer/manufacture aspect of things. No indeedy. What stood out to me, instead, was that everyone interviewed for the piece said: "Digital Video Disk this... Digital Video Disk that..." and "Digital Video Disk the other..." This soon got initialised to DVD as the column inches were running dry. Everybody was saying DVD: "DVD, DVD, DVD, &".

But life's not like that, is it? You don't struggle with three letters when two will suffice, after all. Do you say "Audio Compact Disk", for instance? "ACD"? No, you don't. You say "CD", as does everyone else.

So, the Digital Video Disk is destined to be known, in popular culture, as VD.

He's invented a new computer chip... Part two

And what this heralds, when you get down to the nitty gritty, is lots of really useless "jokes" in future sitcoms of the ilk of *So Haunt Me*, *Next of Kin*, or, say, *Birds of a Feather*. You know? And seeing as I'm easily as crap as the writers of all three of the above, I thought I'd use this column to get in there first. And why not, eh? What follows is only a few lines of dialogue, sure, but with a bit of TLC it could very easily be fluffed out to make a complete, side-splitting sitcom episode. Or maybe even an entire series – a whole one-joke series. Excellent! In fact, let's give this sitcom a name... um, how about *Bob and Chums*? Yeah, that'll do nicely...

Bob and Chums

1996, series one, episode one, about three minutes in...

(SCENE: boring techno-gadget freak, Bob, is attempting to chat up stereotypical tart, Wendy, at a bus stop, unaware that all he actually needs to say to her is "Come back to my place and drop them". His rather sad chums are watching from a distance.)

Bob: Your hair is very beautiful. Er, what's your favourite movie?

Wendy: Anything with Jean Claude van Damme in it! He's so hunky!

Bob: Really? Have you seen *Rise of the Robots* yet?

Wendy: No, but it's next on my list!

Bob: I've got a copy of it at home, you know.

Wendy: Oh, wow! Then maybe I should just get off the bus at YOUR stop! [She wiggles her barely covered shoulders, tantalisingly.]

Bob: Maybe you should! Maybe you should! [He turns his head and raises a lecherous eyebrow in the direction of his impressed chums.]

Wendy: Your place it is then. Here comes the bus.

Bob: [Proudly] And guess what... I've got VD!

You can guess what happens next, so I won't belabour the point. But for the rest of the *Bob and Chums* series, here are some other classic comedy

one-joke moments, all followed by raucous canned laughter...

1 "Do you have VD?"

2 "She's got VD!"

3 "I've had VD for years, darling!"

And so on. But enough of the sitcom script predictometer and back to the point of the opening paragraph, which was the existence of my newly sentient computer. (And, more importantly, its money-making ideas.) Here's its latest scam...

> First off, gringo, you saturate all the classified papers with box ads proclaiming "Postal Orders At Vastly Reduced Rates". The small type gives your address and a pretend guarantee. Oh, and there's an impressive looking logo, too.

> That'll all cost a bit, won't it?

> Don't think so small, gringo. You've got to cast a wide net. Ask yourself who earns more – the fisherman or the trawler captain?

> Okay. Go on.

> And then you wait. Before long all the stupid people in the country – the ones who, for some misguided reason or another, conduct their money matters using Postal Orders – will be knocking at your door.

> Alright. So what happens next?

> Let me put it like this, gringo: a £200 postal order, bought at a post office by a stupid person, costs £212.

> Blimey! £212? Really?

> Yes. But how about you sell that same stupid person a £200 cheque for £208 – a cheque from your own cheque book, made over to whoever they request? What's the result there?

> They, er, save four quid?

> Yes... and you make eight, for roughly 30 seconds work with a pen.

> Oh, yeah, I see what you mean.

You're right!

> Of course I'm right. I'm an advanced intelligence.

> And with a few hundred punters a day I could be a millionaire within... wow, a couple of years! Three at most!

> You got it, gringo.

> Excellent. And then I could afford to go out and get VD! I'd be the first person in my family to have it!

> Er, gringo, why do I feel a slight déjà vu?

Ed's note: Mr Cursor seems to have become trapped in a one-joke crap-sitcom loop. Hopefully he'll have clawed his way out of it by next month. Let's wait and see, eh? **Z**

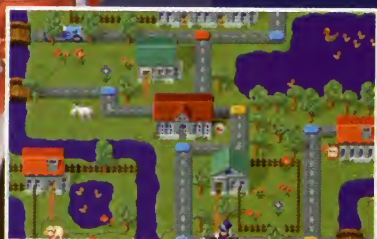
MR CURSOR
FINANCIAL SERVICES
AFTERNOON, MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY, SUNDAY, 10:00 AM - 10:00 PM
HEAVENLY
PLEASE - THIS MONTHS COLUMN AND A BIG LOAD OF CASH!
I'M RICH NOW SO I'VE BOUGHT MY OWN ISLAND.
WITH COMPLIMENT
The Mansion, 88 Millionaire Row, Isle of Cursor, Nor



DR. DRAGO'S MADCAP CHASE

FILL UP THE FRIDGE,
INVITE SOME FRIENDS OVER
AND EXPERIENCE A FUN PACKED
EVENING WITH DR. DRAGO...

REV UP YER ENGINES!
The chase hits the road
beginning of July.



Rank	Name	Score	Time	Points
1	Dr. Drago	550,000	5:00	6,000
2	Dr. Drago	540,000	5:10	5,800
3	Dr. Drago	530,000	5:20	5,600
4	Dr. Drago	520,000	5:30	5,400
5	Dr. Drago	510,000	5:40	5,200
6	Dr. Drago	500,000	5:50	5,000
7	Dr. Drago	490,000	6:00	4,800
8	Dr. Drago	480,000	6:10	4,600



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